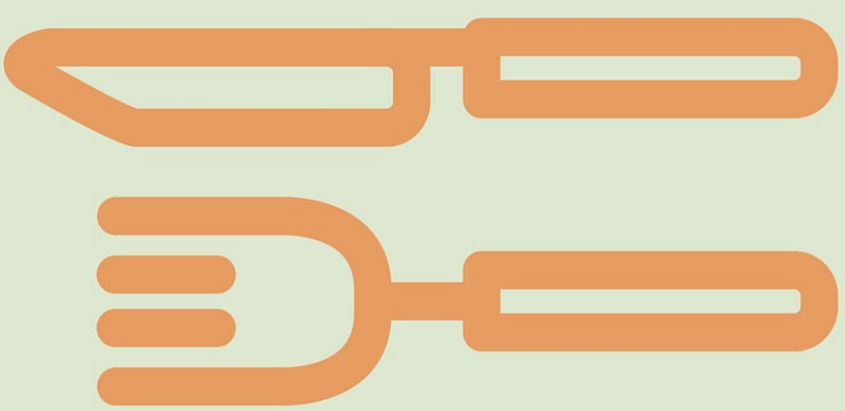
COOK OF THE MERCENARY CORP

PROLOGUE - ME AND THE MERCENARY CORP



Cook of the Mercenary Corp

Prologue - Me and the Mercenary Corp

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Chapter 1 - Cream Stew of the Beginning (Part 1)

(Author's note: This is sorta written in a 4-koma format with the first half being chill, and the second half serious) I like cooking.
When I was young, I was always watching from behind as my mum was cooking.
I, who was brought up with delicious food, obviously held an interest in cooking.
I could finally help out a little when I entered the third grade, handle the knife when I was in middle school, and allowed to handle the pot when I was in high school.
Living such a life, I was good enough to create my own lunch boxes when I was in high school. Discussing my classmate's lunch box contents became everyday lunchtime talk.

Despite this, after graduating high school, finding a job, living by myself, my interest only even further.
There was an increase in time and money after all.
I bought all the Japanese, Western, Chinese books I could get my hands on to study, studying history and recreating cooking methods of the past.
Without really thinking about it, the director of the construction site said
"Your cooking is good but, this line of work might be wrong for you"
or something like that. But I do wonder why I'm working as a plumber.
I simply chose this line of work just so that my parents wouldn't worry. I have no regrets.
After almost two years, the food for the end of year party was made by me. The president said
"Compared to the Japanese restaurant over there, your cooking tastes better and it's cheaper."
or something like that. The preparations were fun so it wasn't that tough.
So coming back from shopping for my twentieth.
For some reason, my hands were tied behind my back, and I was surrounded by men holding spears and swords.

"Who are you? Why are you here"

That's what I want to know.
Coming home from shopping, I got wrapped in a mysterious light and arrived

here.
When I was wrapped in that light, it seems like I had dropped everything, my wallet, the food I just bought, everything.
Jeans and a white shirt, that was all I had.
HAHAHAHAHA。

“What are your laughing at!”
Ah ah, it seems like I made them angry.
The person in front of me glares at me with sharp eyes.
I wanted to run away barefoot. Nah, it wouldn’t be good leaving my shoes behind as they are a part of my properties.

“Umm, you can call me Shuri. Where is this place?”
“The one asking questions is me. Stop speaking nonsense.”

I beg your pardon.
Looking around was a slightly stained tent which looked like it came out of an old war movie.
A pot was being cooked on top of firewood, seriously what era is this.
There were also people sharpening swords, spears, bows and arrow.
Amongst all this, I was detained as if I was the criminal.

“You’re called Shuri right? Where do you belong? What village are you from”
“The countryside of Japan”
“Jyapan… never heard of the place”
“Um, I got lost getting here, and I have no idea where this place is”
“Shut up for me”

It’s like I have no human rights. I give up.(ギブミー。) “So uh, I’m pretty hungry”
“Be quiet, so are we”

Oh? It seems like the leader-like person in front of me is also feeling the hunger pains.
Looking around, there are four people who are surrounding me right now, but they seem to be hungry too.
It appears like I came during mealtime. I can only blame my bad timing.

“Captain, what do?”
“There doesn’t seem to be anything we can take”

“But doing nothing like this won’t do any good”
“However, there’s no way we can just free him. Hurry up and kill him and start preparing for the war.”

How dangerous. It appears to be the meal before the fight.
And it seems that I will be stripped of my assets.

“Uh, excuse me”
“What”
“I’m kinda hungry, can I cook something please?”
“…You, you’re a cook?”

The giant who appeared to be the leader, let’s just call him Leader-san. Leader-san had a quizzical face on him.
Close-cropped cut blonde hair, sharp-eyed handsome man. And he’s muscles were sugoi. It was something envious for an average looking guy like me.
That kind of handsome Leader-san wore full body armour. That kinda armour, you could only see it in movies yo.

“If its cooking then I can do the basics. If you’re going to kill me, at least do it after I eat something please.”

Of course dying wouldn’t be great. I do not wish to die. I dun wanna die!

“Interesting”

Leader-san laughed with a ‘hu’. It was an expressionless laugh. A handsome guy will still be handsome doing that huh.

“In that case, make something delicious. If you do that, I will let you live”
“Captain?! Are you serious?!”
“It’s before the war. Doing something like this to raise the morale of the troops wouldn’t be bad. If it tastes bad then we can just kill him”

Such danger. It became like a development from someone’s history cooking manga.

I, who was released from the ropes, borrowed a pot, a cooking board and a knife.

“The ingredients are over there”

In front of where he pointed was milk, butter, wheat flour, carrots, spring onions, fish, salt, potato.

“Is there anything else?”
“No. This is already quite extravagant. It’s usually Salt and Potato soup.”

That’s tough… I feel depressed just imagining that.

“Then… let’s go with Seafood Cream Stew. It would be so much better if there was shrimp. Since there’s none then let’s replace it with the perch.”

You shouldn’t underestimate perch. It can create good fish stock and bring out flavour.

Three fish were cut up and quickly grilled, it was finished once it was boiled in the pot with some basic preparations and everything was thrown together. If there wasn’t any milk, butter or flour added then using the perch’s stock would’ve still been fine but, these people may not be used to the taste so I stopped.

“Here you go”

Serving it onto a dish, I handed it over to Leader-san. Oh and, the fish bones and intestines were taken care of.
I made a perch soup but putting in the bones just like that might be a little annoying.

“This… soup is white”
“It’s cream stew”
“If it’s bad I’ll kill you”

Well excuse me. I was limited by the ingredients but it should be good.
One bite, Leader-san timidly placed it into his mouth.
And then, stopped.

“Um?”
“How is it captain?”
“…Delicious”

Leader-san started devouring the stew greedily.

“Oi, bring more here”

“Aye aye, I made a lot so don’t worry and keep eating”
“A lot? Even though there was only that many ingredient?”
“Working around with water, perch and milk, even if you don’t have many ingredients, you can still get the amount.
It’s before work right everyone? Eat moderately because eating delicious foods will bring out your full power”

Leader-san made a surprising face.
By the way, at the banquets I did mountain-loads of work to increase the amount while keeping the flavour.

“…I see, it was planned to that extent”

What? I only thought that it would be better to have a lot to eat though?

“You, do you have any place to go?”
“I don’t. I don’t even have any clue as to how to get home”

This place was clearly foreign. I wonder how I’d get back to Japan.
Leader-san, after he finished the cream stew said as he looked me in the eye.

“If you have no place to go, then come join our corp.”
“Eh”
“As a cook. Your job will be to create delicious tasting meals. Until you make it back to your hometown, make meals here”
“Is it ok?”
“I say its ok”
“So, in that case, thanks

Just like this I entered Leader-san’s mercenary corps.

Chapter 2 - Cream Stew of the Beginning (Part 2)

The time of warring states. The eras of various powerful warlords.
The feudal lord of this Sabraeu continent held various big and small influences, boasting himself as the supreme ruler of the continent, immersing himself in nothing but war.
On the battlefields were the exchanges between magic and arrows, the clashing of spears and swords. Amidst life and death, ambitions, hope, and desire melt, forming chaos.
It's because of these times that the business of mercenaries was profitable.
And I, Ganglabe also held such ambitions, together with my four childhood friends we started up a mercenary corps. Our goal was to become a feudal lord, having the country in our hands. So that we can build a place where orphans like us can live without fear and in peace.
Our goal was that kind of peaceful country. One where there's no starvation or poverty. Saving the citizens from dirty rulers who only exploit them.
But, it's already been five years since the start of the mercenary corps. Even now it's still just a small scale corps.
My childhood friends have talent in fighting and magic, I too have confidence with my sword and strategies. Still, no matter how much we fight, how much we earn, there was no way for us to increase the corps.
People, horses, weapon, all eat up money. Going by just my resourcefulness there doesn't seem to be a way to further increase the fifty people we currently have.
And then one day I met him.
Thinking back to it, that was probably a meeting of fate.

That day was the war of Lynbell hills, and we were hired by the lord of the northern lands.
It was a war which dragged on for quite a bit, suitable for the amount we were paid. The northern lord carried gold, and the amount taken from the other lord was also quite an amount.
But the soldiers were tired from the long war.

Two months passed. Labouring just to earn money, I was hoping for the war to end soon but, it was probably extended for too long. We fell into a mud bog.
Not knowing when to stop, it was my mistake.
The twenty troops I was leading were also tired, all the other troops were probably the same.
Something had to be done, I needed something to raise the morale of the troops.

"Captain!"
"What's with the commotion"

Postponing my meal, as I was looking at the map on the tabletop thinking about the method of attack, one of my childhood friends came into the tent.
The one leading the archery unit, Teg. He might just be lucky but, he has never missed a shot, and his unit was made of elites.

"We caught a suspicious guy, came here to tell you"
"Suspicious guy? A spy?"
"Uh…no, doesn't seem to be a spy…"
"Huh?"

A suspicious guy whose not a spy?

I didn't really get it so I went out and met the guy.

…Indeed, suspicious.

Tunic and pants. That was all he was wearing.
However, I've never seen his kind of tunic or pants, nor the sewing method or material. But it was good quality.
And he was a peculiar fellow.
His features were flat and ordinary. Short hair and unusual black eyes.
He was a thin man who also wasn't very tall.
Too weak to be a villager, too delicate to be a soldier, too unrefined to be the son of a ruler.
I've met a lot of people, nurturing my judgement skills and knowledge but, I can't see through this guy.

"Who are you? Why are you here?"

I question cautiously. It would be annoying if I get attacked out of no where.

“HAHAHAHAHA”

For reason he starts laughing.

“What are you laughing at!”

I felt despondent getting angry. What’s with this guy.

“Umm, you can call me Shuri. Where is this place?”
“The one asking questions is me. Stop speaking nonsense.”

It’s useless to try to take advantage of anything. I won’t let you.
But, who is this person. Why is he here.
This was right in the middle of a battlefield, why did this guy who doesn’t seem to be fighting get lost here.

“You’re called Shuri right? Where do you belong? What village are you from”
“The countryside of Japan”
“Jyapan… never heard of the place”

Of all the times and places, even from the veterans who have crossed the various battlefields, I’ve never heard of this place.
Even during the five years since I’ve started my mercenary corps, I’ve never heard of this territory.

“Um, I got lost getting here, and I have no idea where this place is”
“Shut up for me”

He keeps breaking my train of thought.
There was no way to grab onto them as they drifted away. Such a bothersome person shouldn’t exist.

“So uh, I’m pretty hungry”
“Be quiet, so are we”

There’s no way that this guy is some big shot right, I thought for a second. To ask for food in this situation, is that normal?
Rather than that, my mercenary corps have no one to create decent meals.
We can cook for ourselves but, we don’t have a cook who can feed others. That’s why we’ve become used to just eating Salt and Potato soup.

So we're hungry. No matter what we do we're hungry.
Once we arrive at a city, eating to our heart's content is a common goal.

"Captain, what do?"
"There doesn't seem to be anything we can take"
"But doing nothing like this won't do any good"
"However, there's no way we can just free him. Hurry up and kill him and start preparing for the war."

My childhood friends also gave me their opinions.
Indeed we probably can't take anything of value off him, it's better to just kill him quickly.
I also don't know if the information will leak from somewhere. The only option is to get rid of the source of anxiety.

"Uh, excuse me"
"What"
"I'm kinda hungry, can I cook something please?"
"…You, you're a cook?"
"If its cooking then I can do the basics. If you're going to kill me, at least do it after I eat something please."

Doing a trade in this sort of situation huh.
Indeed, our food situation isn't something to be happy about. It'll probably change if we had a cook.

"Interesting"
Grinning, I laugh and say.

"In that case, make something delicious. If you do that, I will let you live"
"Captain?! Are you serious?!"
"It's before the war. Doing something like this to raise the morale of the troops wouldn't be bad. If it tastes bad then we can just kill him"

If he can cook up something delicious, then above all else the soldiers energy would get restored.
If it's no good then its fine to just kill him as revenge.
No matter which it comes to, it'll be a method to raise the morale.

Releasing the ropes, I lent him the kitchen utensils.

“The ingredients are over there”

The boy named Shuri carefully looked at the ingredients he was handed.
The ingredient he could use was just these. I’m not looking forward to something decent with these ingredients.

“Is there anything else?”
“No. This is already quite extravagant. It’s usually Salt and Potato soup.”

This was a lie. Because we don’t have an expert who can make emergency rations, we only maintain the amount of food that we can eat.
If it was a better place, we could maintain things like deer meat.

“Then… let’s go with Seafood Cream Stew. It would be so much better if there was shrimp. Since there’s none then let’s replace it with the perch.”

Shrimp? Perch? Seafood?
This guy, what can he do with these ingredients?
While I was thinking that, that guy started cooking.
He prepared the fish with skillful and familiar hands. I see, so he’s making a meat, potato, spring onion, salt soup.
We always grill the fish to eat. Usually until it’s burnt. Tastes so bad that no one goes for it.
But, Shuri takes out the head and the body, and in particularly the insides beautifully, grilling the head and body, before putting it into the pot to boil in hot water. Then put in the potato after peeling it.
The head? What’s he going to do?

“Can you eat… that?”

One of the commanders behind me murmured.
Indeed, we don’t have a habit of eating the head.
In the meantime, the water boils, and gets dyed slightly white.
…What is that.

“…I think I’m good”

He murmurs again. I’m the one who wants to run away.
However, as the milk, butter, wheat flour which was baking in another pot was poured into it, I felt like fainting.

“Ueeee”

Teg also looked like he wanted to vomit. The pot which was sort of white, turned completely white.
…This guy, it might be better to just kill him right here.

“Finish with some spring onions as toppings”

I don’t know if he felt my killing intent or not but, Shuri served it onto a dish, placing the chopped spring onions on top.

“Here you go”

Should I… eat this.
No matter where I look it’s just white. The head wasn’t put in but, it’s a potato, fish meat completely white soup with spring onion garnish.
But… this is.

“This… soup is white”
“It’s cream stew”

I don’t understand the meaning of that reply.

“If it’s bad I’ll kill you”

Giving him a warning, I scooped out some soup with a spoon.
It looks like that but, I’ll say honestly.

It smells great.

The delicious smell scattered around, soon it released a charm as if it was telling me to eat it now.

Amazingly delicious.

The matching between the fish, milk, and butter. The refreshing taste of the fish, the thick milk and cheese spread with a mild flavourful taste.
Sweet initially then the saltiness suddenly appears, enhancing the taste.

“Um?”
“How is it captain?”
“…Delicious”

That was seriously all I could say. It was in no way bad. This meal was

something you could never eat in the battlefields.

"Oi, bring more here"
"Aye aye, I made a lot so don't worry and keep eating"

What? A lot?

"A lot? Even though there was only that many ingredient?"
"Working around with water, perch and milk, even if you don't have many ingredients, you can still get the amount.
It's before work right everyone? Eat moderately because eating delicious foods will bring out your full power"

So it was like that.
This guy, displaying his excellence through cooking, found a way to survive.
In the battlefield, no matter how much food you have it wouldn't be a bother. Naturally, there's no way to reach out to the supply lines but, if you have delicious food, the soldiers can fight longer. In the cold or the heat, they'll be able to endure it more to some extent.
Meals hold quite an important factor during wars. Siege wars too (i.e. holing up in castle wars), victory is differentiated by the amount of emergency rations available. In all out wars, eating to your heart's fill to restore your energy would increase the soldiers vigor.
That, the knowledge and technique of using only that many of ingredients to create a large amount of food which taste like this.
Maybe the reason he was looking around restlessly and talking like that before was because he was checking out the food situation here, and looking for a chance to promote himself…!

"…I see, it was planned to that extent"

A cook as good as this, there's no way I'll let him go. No matter what he makes good food. In order to eat this food, it'll be good to hire this guy.

"You, do you have any place to go?"
"I don't. I don't even have any clue as to how to get home"

Towards the troubled Shuri, I made a suggestion.

"If you have no place to go, then come join our corp."

“Eh”
“As a cook. Your job will be to create delicious tasting meals. Until you make it back to your hometown, make meals here”
“Is it ok?”
“I’m saying its ok”
“So, in that case, thanks”

Just like that, the mysterious boy Shuri joined our ranks.

From here on, me, the commanding officers, my soldiers, all ate our fill of Shuri’s cooking, working bravely on the battlefield.
The hardships up to that moment, unbelievably sent us into the war front advantageously, reaching to a conclusion within the week.

This is, what the later generations call “The Mercenary corp of heroes” and it’s history embedded soldier’s story.
The first empire which conquered the continent, the first emperor, Ganglabe Denju Aprahda. He left behind a book.
“This Me until then, thought that as long as we were strong we would flourish. But that was wrong.
The strong, you must not have known their reason or background. Why are they strong, how do they become strong.
Most soldiers aim for embracing beautiful women, or obtaining money. But, soldiers will not sway from just that.
In the end, delicious meals support the soldiers, the citizens, and shape the country.
The joy of having lived through that day, being thankful to be able to go into tomorrow. They begin their day with a delicious meal in the morning, ending it with a delicious meal at night. Isn’t that what happiness should be.
This Me, was taught this by him”
Emperor Ganglabe , was attended to by the one cook who was always by his side.
They met when they were younger, advancing together on the battlefield, the one benefactor who cooked him delicious meals.
This was, the cook who supported these heroes. Appearing from nowhere, changing the world’s cooking, the man who paved the way to a new era of

cooking.
The story of Azuma Shuri.

Chapter 3 - Hamburg Steak of Creativity (Part 1)

Hello, it's Shuri. How do you do.
Wrapped in a light as I was coming home from shopping, before I realised I became the cook of a mercenary corp in a foreign land. You never know what happens in this world huh.
From there I was taught about the current times by the Leader-san, Ganglabe-san.
Somehow, this is another world. I've never heard of a continent called Sabreau.
Magic is something which exists, so this encouraged the thought that this wasn't Earth. Normally I would also have talent in magic and become peerless MUAHA! but it wasn't like that. I cried a little.
Now then, I've been here for a week. It seems like we've won the battle this time. There doesn't seem to be any victims from our corps.
Ganglabe-san said,

"It's all because of your meals. They provide us with power"

Sooooo~ he says but, in the end it's the courage and tenacity from those fighting in the front lines right.

Now then, the rewards this time round was of course, money. I requested for the seasoning and ingredients.
As expected just salt is sort of tough. Spices, vinegar, fish sauce, they all went to me. I didn't know that the ruler made it a little difficult. The food situation was harsh everywhere thus I couldn't really say anything nice.
I'm grateful to Ganglabe-san for my repertoire increasing but seriously, I'm getting tired of just soups and stews. I'm receiving damage mentally from eating the same foods.
Furthermore a problem has come up, I wonder what I should do.

It's the cooking stove.

Basically the heat adjustment. It can only boil so I can't make anything but Stew.

When I heard about the grilled fish situation I was lost for words. They seemed to just eat it completely burnt, the details gave me chills thinking about when they'll contract cancer.
I wonder if that's just a myth? Such as it isn't good to not eat from a completely filled steel drum, there are some various opinions on these things. Its true that they are sometimes real and they could be lies but, the fact that it's not good for your health is the truth.
After I told Ganglabe-san, he was speechless. The other troops were also shocked.

Discussing with Ganglabe-san, he introduced me to a particular commander. The leader of the Magic Crafters division, Riru-san.

"So Riru-san, let's cooperate please"
"Nn"

We ended up going to the tent of the Magic Crafters divisions for a discussion. The Magic Crafters division was one where designing tools with magic, loading tools with magic, and manufacturing such tools seemed to be their main job. It's the so called Magic Tool things. And it seems to be possible to build using magic. It seemed like she displayed her power during the construction of the camp site.

"And? Request? Quick."

Riru-san didn't say much.
She was a short, Loli Bishoujo. She wore simple clothes, a white coat over her indigo-blue tunic and pants. She was complete with her scornful eyes and blue-green hair behind her.
If she came to my world, she would probably get spoiled by popular, big onii-sans.

"First, it's like this"

I explained it with a simple image. It was a portable cooking stove.

"Make it so the flames are adjustable here like this, so that the fire can hit the pot on top of the metal thing"
"?"
"And then, I want the control of the flames to be possible from here"
"I see"

Suddenly I looked next to me, a mess of a tool was there.

“What is that”
“Ignition material. Paper that’ll burn when you insert mana”
“Please put this to use”
“?”

Basically, paper is fine. Just as well that it seems that we can also make paper which won’t get wet, let’s combine them for use.
I requested the paper.
First, it was something which even if you roll it, it’ll unroll right back. We’ll release the flames while the pot, made of two big balls, floats via magic of something. And then the flames can be adjusted using the small ball. Let’s also make it so that after a certain period of time has passed there’s a function that closes it naturally. Accidents are scary.
After I told her this, Riru-san made a surprised face and displayed her motivation.

After some time it was done.
It was a handheld portable stove in the shape of a magic circle. Just what I requested.

“This is amazing Riru-san!”
“Of course”

With a ‘Hmph’, she stuck out her chest, it was quite cute.

“Then let’s make the new dish extremely savory”
“Oh!”

I start cooking immediately.
This time it’s a Hamburg Steak. Let’s make the sauce simply from fish sauce and mimic daikon. If we use the fish sauce just like this, there’ll be a fishy smell so to get rid of the smell I dip some spring onion into the sauce.And although I say that, it doesn’t completely get rid off the smell but, it gets separated better. Nam Plaa is tough.
Putting some beef into my hands and mixing it with flour to make a shape, I complete it.

“Thanks for the wait”

“Un!”

The happy RIru-san was quite cute.
Riru-san used a fork to cut it up, and moved it towards her mouth.
That action was quite cute.

“Uun! Mm, mm!”

That’s great, it seems like it tastes good.
I smile at the expressionless Riru-san. The Hamburg steak was finished in a blink of an eye as she moved it towards her mouth, piece by piece.
It was also great that I got a light, easy to carry portable stove.

After this, we went to battle again but, it seems that Riru-san’s tools played a major role in our victory.
As expected of Riru-san, she’s perfect.

Chapter 4 - Hamburg Steak of Creativity (Part 2)

Riru is a genius. Riru's name wasn't famous yet.
5 years ago Riru was invited by my childhood friend Ganglabe, and entered the mercenary corp. Riru was an orphan and so went with all the other orphans who were living in the slums.
Riru had talent in Magic Engineering. Riru even boast about it myself. During the times in the slums Riru would make various items helping Riru's friends, even now in the corps Riru is someone who works behind the scenes.
But to me, Riru had no talent in the thing Riru wanted, magic.
Magic and Magic Engineering is different.
Both Magic and Magic Engineering use the mana that floats in the air. The difference between Magic is being able to use it even against humans, or being able to use it only with materials.
Magic Engineering changes the shapes of materials by interfering with the shape, being able to use engraved letters known as 'Magi Spells' to add magic power to materials.
Basically it's able to manipulate the material's shape and load power into the material.
However you can't touch it directly, not having any combat potential at all unlike Magicians. Unable to work anything other than a craftsman.
Riru's childhood friends are nice, and there is no one who would make fun of her magic engineer comrades.
However during combined strategies, the other troops will talk ill of them.
Riru, together with her subordinates could do nothing but grind their teeth and endure.
It was at that time. A weird person became our comrade.
It was a guy called Shuri. He had a strange atmosphere and looked weird.
At first I was cautious. But his meals tastes nice and he was a nice person.
Not a bad person, I thought.

When we won the battle, Riru and Ganglabe, the other commander's were listening to Shuri.

Shuri came to say that apart from money, as a reward he also wanted ingredients and seasoning.
Up till now he only received money but, Shuri was desperate.
Ganglabe who saw that understood, entered negotiations with the grumbling ruler, succeeded and got the ingredients as he wished.
When everyone asked why,

"Up till now we, have only been harassing for money. However, seeing Shuri made me realise.
Just having money in our pockets won't fill us up. You can't look down on someone in charge of food. In that case, just having money doesn't mean that we can have food and seasoning, just that can lower our necessary expenses. We'll manage where we stay until we get hired for another battle somehow.
Ma, it's him. I wonder if food supply control will be overseen."

It seems like they have faith in Shuri.

Listening to our old food circumstances, they were all talking about Salt soup and Burnt fish.
Shuri was surprised and told them frantically.
First, having nothing but Salt soup harms your health, seemingly. Destroys your body, and seems like it'll break down your condition.
And then the burnt fish, that's the worst he said. No matter what they do, if they ate nothing but burnt fish, they'll die from a serious disease which can't be healed.
Everyone was speechless. If Riru and the others weren't lucky we would be dead.
After that, everything concerning food was handled by Shuri. We could eat soups varying in flavour and ingredients. It was tasty, and good for your body. In the beginning Riru thought it tasted a little watery but after getting used to it Riru could really taste the ingredients. Sweet, bitter, spicy, sour. Riru could taste them all. It was all very comforting.
Thinking back, Riru thinks the salt soup tasted way too thick. Riru and other's taste buds were broken.
What Shuri said was true.
Ganglabe also agreed.

"Meals become the power for people. Money won't make you move, I finally

realised this…”

Riru also believes this.
Having money, you can make a lot of things but,
It won’t fill you up.

That kind of Shuri, Riru came to rely on him.
That day, Riru’s fate was decided.

“So Riru-san, let’s cooperate please”
“Nn”

That day, Shuri came to Riru’s tent.
Looking so restless, it was a rare sight.
Anyway I heard from Ganglabe that Shuri wanted a certain object to be made.
A pot? Or maybe a knife?

“And Request? Quick”

I don’t really get it but, whatever he wants has something to do with the kitchen.
A knife which cuts well or, a ladle that won’t rust.
It would be easy if I wanted to make it.

“First, it’s like this”

However, Shuri’s request was more extraordinary than what Riru had imagined.
Borrowing some paper and charcoal, he drew a rectangular box that I’ve never seen before.
What does this object have anything to do with cooking?

“Make it so the flames are adjustable here like this, so that the fire can hit the pot on top of the metal thing”
“?”

I didn’t really get it, but then I realised.
I see, it was a coal problem.
Indeed, if there was a tool to easily start a fire, cooking would be easier.

“And then, I want the firepower adjustment to be possible from here”

“I see”

Firepower adjustment? What does the firepower have anything to do with cooking?
Isn’t it fine to just use a strong flame to make the soup and eat it while its hot?

“What is this?”

Doing that, Shuri pointed at the ignition materials and asked.
Riru made those with confidence and they’ll burn once you put in some mana.
This makes lighting things on fire easy. It’s even helpful during battles.
The downfall is that only magicians and magical engineers can use them.

“Ignition material. Paper that’ll burn when you insert mana”
“Please put this to use”
“?”

Put to use?
Asking that, Shuri said something surprising.
First, make it using paper. Then he wants it to float after writing some magi spells on top of the pot.
Float? Techniques for making objects float exist but the output released could at most only move a large rock. Few people use it as they don’t think it’s very helpful.
Then after it floats release flames underneath?
I was shocked. Making it float then heating it. Combining two magi spell effects, and to draw it?
I’ve never thought about it. After it floats, then attaching some effect to it. I see, just floating is useless. It has to be able to move. If it’s not like that, just floating isn’t helpful at all.
And then, using the small circle’s magi spell to adjust the firepower?
None of these require a magician or magic engineer to insert magic in directly. A function which reacts once you touch it, which according to the function takes in mana, and then if we add in adjusting functions, even people who can’t use mana can use this magic tool.
And then it seems like he wants it so that when it hasn’t been used for a while it’ll close. It should be around an hour.
Furthermore so that the paper won’t get wet, curling it and then folding it out

immediately, ideas just keep shooting out.
Shuri is amazing.
Riru thinks that Riru was a genius but that was a big mistake.
Shuri is a genius. Riru can't even reach his ankles.
Riru'll try to finish his request quickly.
When the magic engineers write the magi spells, using an exclusive brush to insert mana, displaying its power by engraving the special characters.
But, having two effects and working together, adding an adjustment function is just the beginning.
Despite this Riru's hands didn't stop, believing in my knowledge and conceptions.
That's right, the magi spells don't have to be a single character.
The magi spell that normal magic tools use finish with a single character.
But this time it's different. It has to contain complex circuits and functions.
Not just one character, lining up all the related magi spells to write, furthermore while keeping that stable, adding a function to transmit mana and a mechanism to control the amount…
In the end, Riru wrote the magi spell tightly on the round shape. Also altogether there were 4 dials to place the pot.

"This is amazing Riru-san!"
"Of course"

Shuri praised surprisingly.
Riru was also satisfied after creating this epic creation. Hmph.

"Then let's make the new dish extremely savory"
"Oh!"

New dish? I look forward to it.
What Shuri took out was, beef, flour, fish sauce, spring onion and daikon (Tl - White radish).
'Uee', I thought.
Riru isn't a big fan of meat. Fish is fine but, the meat stench is terrible.
What should I say, is it the smell of lead or…?

But then Shuri suddenly started hacking the beef into pieces with the knife.
To be honest it was grotesquely scary.

After a short while the beef was no longer in its original shape to the point of a mess. It was barely recognisable that it was meat.
After bringing it together in the one place, he tossed the spring onions into the fish sauce. Adding spring onion to fish sauce?
The daikon was also finely cut and then hacked to pieces. It was a mess.
I want to run away. I don't want to eat that kind of bizarre cooking.
And then, after bringing together the daikon as well, he reached for the meat.
Mixing in a little flour, he arranged it into a circular shape in his hands.
It was interesting how the meat was somehow moving strangely inside his hands and slowly becoming round.
And then, he tossed the meat into the pot. Covering it with salt and spices then cooking it.
Somehow, it smells good. It doesn't have the usual beastly or lead smell.
A great colour came to sight after a quick flip.
At that time I realised. The fire from the magic circle coal was weak.
I see, instead of using a strong fire to cook it in one go, carefully cook it around medium heat.
That's how it gets cooked deliciously.
He placed the cooked circular-shaped meat onto a plate before adding diced daikon, fish sauce and spring onions.
Rather, the soup looks something like sauce.

"Thanks for waiting"
"Un!"

But, it smells really good.
The smell of the spices and meat mix, it was close to violence. Riru was tempted to eat it.
There wasn't the usual unpleasant feelings. Cutting the edge using a fork, mixing together the daikon and sauce, I move it to my mouth.

This is, the truth.

The meat oils were sweet, the chewy texture was soft and melted inside my mouth.
As it melts, the sweet oils fills up again.
That sweetness adjusts with the salt, the spices bring out the positive

deliciousness.
The meat's original harshness, sweetness, bitterness, aroma and smell. They were all comforting.
The sauce was most amazing.
If it were just by itself, the oils would simply possess a heavy taste but, it was refreshing inside of Riru's mouth.
In the sauce, instead of the usual fishy smell there was a refreshing sourness, the feel of the daikon's crunch and the overflowing juice and fresh salty taste, the heavy taste of the oil was brilliantly eliminated.
This is, amazingly delicious.

"Mmm! Mm, mm!"

Sounds leaked due to the overly deliciousness.
Looking at it, Shuri smiled happily.
Somehow, Riru was eating something delicious and Shuri was also happy.
I felt happy.

Riru was inexperienced. There was no way for her to be famous.
After eating a dish called a Hamburg steak, Riru listened to Shuri.
Why he knew various things and such.

"That's true. Probably due to the hard work of my ancestors.
Of course, I also put in an effort. With this and that hand, trying, failing, then succeeding.
Creativity, or something. I couldn't really get the point so I suffered"

I laughed bitterly.
I see, what Riru is lacking is creativity.
Just "making" is no good, if theres no "creating".

After that, Riru recalled Shuri's words and request and made a new invention.

"And, you want to show me something?"

I secretly met up with Ganglabe.

First, a handheld catapult.

A catapult is, a huge installation which fires boulders far away, a siege weapon which destroys castle walls and guards at the same time.

And this was making light of it.

The procedures are simple.

Place the boulder on top of the paper.
Then, touch the initiation sequence.
Doing so, the boulder will fly in a parabola as drawn.
It wasn't as big as the catapult, a paper the size of which a solder could carry on their backs and run about was brought out.
The catapult had its disadvantages, whether it's the attacking or the moving form, or having to keep setting up the construction.
But to use this, you expand, set up, and touch. There was nothing that could compare to its convenience.

The other one was the ignition stone.

It looks just like a stone but once you chant the keyword, it will activate through touch, exploding after three seconds.
Objects within the radius of one meter are in the range of combustion.
The disadvantage is that, if you aren't careful you might hurt yourself or comrades.
To add one thing to another, training is a must.

Lastly is the time-restricted ignition jewel.

It's a jewel which after touching it, and saying the keyword and time, will release fire after the time limit.
The earliest you can activate it is two hours before.
The disadvantage is that it doesn't have much power. It's just a stone which can burn very well.

But while Ganglabe was surprised, he was also in joy.

"If we have this then we don't need expensive catapults!
The ignition stone will also become a strong weapon for the troops, the time-restricted ignition jewel as well is perfect for secret military operations!
As expected of you Riru!"

But, I felt a little guilty.
This idea was completely Shuri's.

But I won’t lose.
Creativity. Riru will continue to invent from here on out.

If you ask about Riru Branshu, there was almost no one that wouldn’t know how great she is, becoming one of the heroes.
Her inventions reversed many battlefield situations, at times having enough power to decide how the battle ends.
The most famous of which is probably the castle siege of Yanangan.
At the time, because of the three weapons she invented, the impregnable castle of Yanangan fell in just three days.
Catapults were mass-produced and boulders fell like rain.
The ignition rocks displayed their prowess in close-quarter combat.
The time-restricted ignition jewels were planted in the night assaults.
For the enemy it was nothing other than a nightmare.
Even after this battle she kept inventing, historians and archaeologists suggest that due to her presence, wars ended ten years early.

However after the unity of the kingdoms, she declined the position as the state magic engineer.
The ministers who didn’t really know her were bewildered, but those who knew her for some time were understanding and showed her out.
After she declined as state magic engineer, she established a private school for magic engineers. This is currently holds the continent’s greatest facility and environment, becoming the Branshu Magic Engineer’s academy.
And now the status of magic engineers and the improvement of their skill is what they’re striving towards. Letting them understand the importance of the humiliated magic craftsman and masters who until then could do nothing but manufacture.
However apart from the specialties of creating weapons the academy dedicates the majority of the courses to making daily life more convenient, focusing on the production, research and study of tools closely related to daily life.
The theory that she came up with, the ‘Magi Spell’, which until then were formed from singular characters display the complex effects of a ‘Magi Program’ as they function together. The invocation activated through speech, ‘Keywords’. Activation through touch, ‘Magi Switch’. Becoming a method for peace.
The expression which was always conveying the school spirit,

“Creativity”, becoming something that was always being communicated.

I digress but, Riru Branshu was remains in the record as an unparalleled hamburg steak lover.
That was definitely the food which became her tipping point and,
I wonder if it’s the food which taught her creativity.
The happy appearance of her eating the steak made everyone feel warm and fluffy.

Chapter 5 - Deep-fried Horse Mackerel of Understanding (Part 1)

It’s Shuri. Today there seems to be a battle at the forest next to the beach.
The point is that the people who want to get salt, seem to be fighting with the people who want to protect their right for the salt. Salt is essential for human life, so I guess that sort of thing is possible.
True, if I can’t get any salt I would also end up troubled. I might have to cover it up using stock.
It’s just that, because recently Riru-san has been infatuated with hamburg steak, and if there’s no salt, the flavour takes a big hit…

In the last battle Riru-san contributed significantly. The reward money and food was insane. So this time, if we win the battle the soldiers can upgrade their equipment, and it seems like we will be able to increase our numbers. Just cooking for nearly 50 people is tough, increasing that would be unthinkably hard.

To that Ganglabe-san said.

“It’s fine if we just hire someone to help you right”

I agreed.

During mealtime Ganglabe-san came and discussed something with me.

“Recently Cougar’s been acting weird”

“Cougar-san, is it”

“He seems to be worried. The infantry that that guy’s leading are our mercenary corps’ assault troops. Can you help me somehow?”

Infantry are fighters who carry spears and swords as is. They are amazing people who go furthest into enemy lines during a battle.
And Cougar-san was the captain of the infantry. One of Ganglabe-san’s childhood friends, a sword expert who seems to be the only person who can fight on par with Ganglabe-san.

A day without battle, around night time.

I finish my cleaning up, and was getting ready to make preparations for tomorrow's breakfast, when someone secretly sneaked out from a commander's tent, disappearing into the forest.

My, who is it I wonder?

There's no way that it's a betrayal. A captain who would betray the mercenary corps that their childhood friends came to built and fight for with their lives for 5 years, doesn't exist.

Sneakily following behind, in an open space of the forest there's a man who was swinging his sword like crazy.

A pretty boy. A person whose looks were sensitive and makes you think that he might be a girl. Blue hair reflecting from the moonlight, it was dreamy.
Rather than defense, he swings his longsword while wearing light leather armour which focused on speed.

"Who is it, person over there"

I'm pretty sure he wasn't looking over here tho…?!

"S-sorry"

"Ah, Shuri. Don't be surprising me"

The pretty boy smiled sweetly. This person is Cougar-san.
Even though his arm are thin, his sword swings are extremely quick.

"What's wrong? It's so late"

"Well, ya' kno. It's a slump"

As Cougar-san sat down with a thump, he looked up towards the moon.
He was a like a person in a painting, watching a play at a theatre somewhere.
Damn, is it that no matter what pretty boys do, they'll get painted…!!?

"A slump, is it?"

"Yah. Recently Riru-chan been try'n hard yea? Making cool things, contributing to battles. But I'm no good at anything but swingin' my sword.
With my talent, this is probably the limit ya' kno"

Cougar-san murmured sadly.

Slumps. I understand too.
When I can't cook well, when I couldn't do my job well.
I felt the limits of my talent plenty of times.

"Don't talk about something as depressing as talent please"

"Hn?"

"I, also have no talent.
Despite that, I put in effort, gaining a lot of knowledge and experiences and somehow adding them to my available techniques.
Cougar-san you wield the sword extremely beautifully. It's not a slump, you've just encountered a hurdle."

The difference between me and Cougar-san is, stopping at the hurdle or getting to the thing past the hurdle.

"A hurdle… huh"

"Y-you're probably hungry right. I'll go make some supper"

"Is it alright?"

"If I give food out to people who're working hard, Ganglabe-san wouldn't be mad"

Let's decide on a meal.
I brought some ingredients from the campsite.
This time will be Deep-fried horse mackerel. Let's go with Horse Mackerel, Tartar sauce and Japanese pepper.

Preparing the horse mackerel by opening it up, adding flavour to the ginger juice with salt and pepper, covering it with oil fried Japanese pepper, flour and egg then quickly frying it.

"Looks delicious"

Cougar-san looked pretty excited.

"It's spicy"

To finish, I pour tartar sauce over the cooked dish.

"Ohh! Crunchy and fluffy. It even has a sweet and sour flavour!"

That’s great.

“The preparation of the fish was done quite well huh”

“I sliced it slowly with a knife where it was soft”

You can’t cut it with force. It tastes better taking apart the fish carefully.

In the battle this time, Cougar-san defeated many enemies and won.

Thanks, I achieved enlightenment, said Cougar-san.

Congratulations on getting out of your slump.

Chapter 6 - Deep-fried Horse Mackerel of Understanding (Part 2)

The sword is good. If you swing the sword, the heart disappears, it's just right for gathering concentration.
Even when I encounter enemies, I cut to my heart's content. Even against thieves.

My world has enemies, comrades, and the sword.

Such simplicity is good.

I am Cougar. The commander of the infantry for the mercenary corp.

My infantry is gathered from guys who could do nothing but fight then fight some more.

Using swords, spears, and tools. Gathering those who are skillful to those who boast of their strength, we look for ways to annihilate the enemy.

Charging the furthest in the front lines and knocking down the enemy. Opening up the path for the guys behind us. That's our job. It's our pride.

I don't use tools. Nor spears. I only use a two-hand sword.

I have no relations with spears, bows, magic or magic tools. I only use my one sword to defeat the enemies.

However recently it hasn't been like that.

Riru-chan. That kid's talent has bloomed

Her three inventions have even been arranged to my troops who adapted to them immediately. Doing this we've been able to defeat more enemies. Speaking of which, my subordinates have been happy about this.

But then, that's no different from the magic engineers right?

Our pride came from defeating the enemy with our weapons. But not doing so is fine in it's own way, was what I started to think.

That’s no good.

We fight on the front lines. But that’s not all.
The Shingari (those who hold back the enemy at the very back of the retreat zone) at the retreat zone also can’t be set up. At that time, can we leave behind the tools?

We can’t. With that kind of firmness there should be no need to retreat in the first place.

But, I can’t persuade them anymore.

Of course those who understand the importance of the sword exist too. However most of them rely on Riru-chan’s tools.

If it’s convenient even I would use it.

But I’m a shield. It’s no good if a shield relies on accessories.

Originally I lived in the slums.

In such a dirty environment together with Ganglabe and the others, we survived by supporting each other.

At that time, I always held wooden and iron sticks charging the furthest into enemy lines. Even when we were running away I would be furthest back holding off the enemy.

It’s probably because of that. I have quite a lot of faith in my sword hand.

But, I still can’t win over Ganglabe.

That genius, the sword technique I spent the majority of my life to learn, learnt it in just a short while.

But Ganglabe is already a commander. There’s no reason for him to go into the front lines.

I charge forth the furthest, decorating that guy’s path to the stage.

However, my skill with the sword also became harder to improve.

The quickness and weight of the sword as well.

This might be the limits of my talent.

But, I found out one night.

I have to forge forth my sword on my own.

From the techniques that the soldiers went and pillaged until now, into my own technique.

One night I rushed out after getting into an argument with a subordinate.

I didn't want to hear how those idiots who always rely on ignition gems suggest how they practise and just rushed out.

Going into the forest, I subconsciously drew out my sword when I reached an open area.

It's being like this for years, in front of my eyes, my body continued practising.

Having no kinds of magic, I kept practising fighting enemies realising the limits of my concentration.

I call it shadow practise.

I crossed with many swords like that.

…No.

As I thought, my ideal sword will definitely be flawed with a goal that I can't reach.

At that time I felt someone's presence from the forest.

"Who is it, person over there"

I tried calling out and a man came out under the shadow of the tree.

And with an awkward looking face.

"S-sorry"

"Ah, Shuri. Don't surprise me"

Shuri the cook.

The weirdo that Ganglabe recently recommended and recruited into the corp.

It's true that recently the food tastes good, and it's good for my body condition.

But why is this guy here.

“What’s wrong? It’s so late”

“Well, ya’know. It’s a slump”

For some reason I told this guy.

I haven’t told anyone truthfully about my problems. Saying something like feeling the limits of my talents, I can’t complain even if I get thrown out the corp.

But being able to talk about it now made me happy.

Sheathing my sword I sat down depressingly.

“A slump, is it?”

“Yah. Recently Riru-chan’s been try’n hard yea? Making cool things, contributing to battles. But I’m not skilled at anything but swinging my sword. With my talent, this is probably the limit ya’kno”

Saying it myself I became depressed.

It’s not like I’m jealous of Riru-chan. But, I’m envious.

And my troops are also starting to tire of someone like me.

“Don’t talk about something as depressing as talent please”
“Hn?”

“I, also have no talent.
Despite that, I put in effort, gaining a lot of knowledge and experiences and somehow adding them to my available techniques.
Cougar-san handles the sword extremely beautifully. It’s not a slump, you just encountered a hurdle”

I felt like tears would come out.

He said it was beautiful, this murderous sword.

Even though it’s not beautiful, even though it’s stained with blood.

No, it’s a sword which was swung to save my comrades.

Maybe it was me who didn’t notice that.

Praising the sword which was used for the sake of my comrades.

I might not have believed that.

I thought as I cast my eyes down so that he can't see my tears.

A hurdle huh. I have to get over the hurdle huh.

"A hurdle… huh"

The hurdle belonging to the limits of talent, I have to come around and practise to become greater.

"Y-you're probably hungry right. I'll go make some supper"

"Is is alright?"

"Even if I give food out to people who're working hard, Ganglabe-san wouldn't be mad"

When he mentioned Ganglabe's name I jumped.

I just noticed, but where's Ganglabe?

That's why this guy is encouraging me, motivating me with those words.

… That guy, acting considerate at a time like this.

Not caring about my mental state, Shuri came over carrying Horse Mackerel, oil and some kind of Japanese pepper.

What is that yellow, sticky thing?

Now I think about it, before when Shuri put in nothing but egg and oil and spices and mixed it together this was also there.

I wonder what he needed it for then? Ah, thinking about it I ignored him then, this me.

Shuri deep fried the Japanese pepper(Sanshou) and immediately crumbled the bread crumbs into tiny pieces and threw it on.

Preparing the fish beautifully, inserting the pepper, dipping it in the breadcrumbs and eggs then placing it into the oil.

"Looks delicious"

It had a great smell.

The savory smell of fresh fish being fried in oil was irresistible.

I originally loved fish to death but, I think having a thicker taste is good too.

“It’s spicy (Pirikara)”

Pirikara?

He probably means that it’s a little spicy.

And then Shuri took out the horse mackerel, giving it to me with the thing dyed in yellow.

Was there anything yellow?

I felt that it was fine like that and this guy’s cooking is delicious, I knew that, so without a care I stuffed it into my mouth.

First, it was crunchy.

Then, it became fluffy.

It was a strange eating experience. Taking a bite it would be crunchy but the inside would be soft and the savory taste and smell spread intensely inside my mouth.

I didn’t even know that the taste of fish could be subjected to this inside my mouth.

Light and heavy. The combination which shouldn’t match was in a perfect harmony.

Then the yellow thing. This was irresistible.

It was sour but it wasn’t a bad sour.

Sour and delicious, the taste was noticeable without interfering with the taste of the mackerel.

“Ohh! Crunchy and fluffy. It even has a sweet and sour flavour!”

That’s right, the taste was good too.

The fragrance of the peppers entered my nose as an aftertaste, so refreshing.

It was a little spicy like he said but, nothing unbearable.

Spicy but not.

This is probably the meaning of Pirikara.

“The preparation of the fish was done quite well huh”

I asked casually as I brought the horse mackerel and stuff to my mouth.

It had no bones and was beautiful to the eye.

“I sliced it slowly with a knife where it was soft”

At a soft spot. Slicing it slowly.

With those words I felt a divine revelation.

That’s right, there’s no way I can just copy whatever Ganglabe, that massive guy does.

There’s no way I have the amount of strength he has. Always fighting skillfully.

Fighting, defeating them through the crevice of their armour.

But, just that is no good.

The crevice in the armour, the “soft spot” in the crevice of the defence.

And then, the crevice of their consciousness. If we add this then it’s good.

If attacked there, you can cut through even with a slice. There’s no need for the cut to have power.

I tried asking Shuri what talent was.

Then that guy answered after some worried thinking.

“Hmm well, isn’t it something you realise?
Something like noting the points which the other excels in, does poorly in, then making the points which they excel in and making that your own.

It seems to be called Shuhari (The fundamentals). They form the entirety of martial arts. Keeping the original form with Shu, then breaking and innovating with Ha, finally with Ri you detach yourself from Shu and Ha and make something which is truly your own.”

(TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shuhari)

Shuhari. This was the first time I've heard of this.

So that's how it is. I have to break open my shell and start fresh.

Then I have to look for clues.

After separating from Shuri I did nothing but continue my shadow practise.

I was well versed in shadow practise to a frightening degree.

I was being such a pathetic loser just then, but quickly it seemed like I could win again.

Of course, there's no way I'm planning on throwing away the power sword.

It's just that I got a new sword.

If the power sword is called "Gouken" then let's call the technique sword "Juuken".

Once again with this one step I felt like I've gotten several ten steps more powerful.

The battle later on, I displayed my Juuken and Gouken in front of those guys who were relying on the tools as usual.

When I came to be, there were no enemies in my vicinity. It seems everyone could only surround me at a distance due to my strength.

Also winning the battle, also getting the money~

After that, my subordinates apologized to me and asked me to teach them the sword.

Naturally I understood that they returned to my control.

However, they were also my precious subordinates after all.

If my sword is able to "save" anyone.

Then that's also fine as I came to calmly understand.

After the unity of the empire various martial arts were in disarray. These originally cultivated arts of war for the battlefield were made, then rerased.

The reason why was, when you speak of martial arts in the united empire there could only exist two.

The first of which is, Kuugaryu.

The martial art created by the sword saint Cougar Yanagi.

It was during the height of battle for the right of the salts that founder Cougar awakened his strongest sword technique.

It was spread from the first battle where Cougar displayed its prowess defeating a few hundred enemies by himself in a single breath.

Kuugaryu has several derivations.

Using power to cut through the enemy's defences, "Kuugaryu Gouken Style"

Using technique to slice through the enemies like a weave, "Kuugaryu Juuken Style"

Using the heart to grasp the flow of the battlefield and the opponent, "Kuugaryu Shingan Style" (TL:Mind's eye) Given the precondition of fighting an armed opponent when you are unarmed, "Kuugaryu Gouki Style"

Apart from the bow, there exist variations of Kuugaryu for the various weapons and spread as more practical than the schools of the masses.

Generations of emperors even had to learn Kuugaryu as a compulsory subject, and learning until you arrive at its mysteries became a major premise.

Furthermore, Cougar Yanagi as the commander-in-chief of the united empire had a method of encouragement he liked to do as he was defeating enemies.

He recites it like this.

"I believe there are nothing but corpses behind me. But let them realise this. It's not just corpses. There are also the thousands and tens of thousands of lives we saved.

That's why I'll will fight at the front lines.

So that I can protect my closest friends, I will rush out the furthest, becoming their shield and sword"

Believing that the lives that were saved were more than the ones killed, he grasped his sword.

Entrusting Kuugaryu to the later generations, even after resigning from

commandin-chief position due to old age, he was still praised as the strongest.

After retiring, it is said he became a nice old man who enjoys fishing leisurely while drinking and chatting with the emperor who was his childhood friend and other comrades.

During those times he would always eat deep fried horse mackerel.

Even with a face full of wrinkles, he would never fail to eat that dish with a face full of smiles.

Chapter 7 - Boiled Tofu of Lovesickness (Part 1)

It's the chilly season now.
It's already been half a year since I've come to this place. The calendar is the same so the dates are easy to understand.
The trees scatter their leaves, and the wind cools down… I wonder if I can go back home.

Hello, it's Shuri.
I tried saying something poetic but my attachments to earth is thinning. After half a year, a missing person would probably have been fired from their job, and there's no way my parents would be surprised.
I was seriously worried about if there's a law which protects you from something like getting abducted into another world.
Besides, I'm working here now, so I'll just have to establish myself here.

The battle for the rights over the salt ended, and I received a large amount of reward money and ingredients. Ganglabe-san was extremely happy. It seems with this we could increase our troops and complete our armour.
The plan for an assistant cook seemed be to delayed slightly though.

"Why aren't we recruiting for an assistant cook?"
"Because there's no one capable enough to cover you with your skills. Furthermore, getting someone who can cook at this time is also…"

It seems like my hardships will continue.
It's not like I can't just teach someone though.

"Spreading your skills for cooking to other places is a bit…"

I-Is it really such a big deal?!
After all, even Riru-san and Cougar-san seem to like it…

I was slightly shocked but, a battle was happening in the cold district during the cold season.
It seems like the reason this time was exactly for the mineral resources.

Iron and copper and such. Basically the materials for making weapons and daily necessities.
Well, I mean there doesn't seem to be any gold or silver.
But the iron seem to be able to create good quality steel so a fight is inevitable after all.
It's cold.
We're in a cold district during the cold season so the snows been piled up.
It's not piling up. It's been piled up.
If snow piles up for 1 meter then it's at a point where it's been piled up right?

"It's cold isn't it, Riru-san"
"…"

Oh noes, Riru-san's solidifying.
There's no helping it.

"Hyoi"
"…so warm!"

Something I made recently, a warm amazake drink.
(TL: Sweet sake https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazake)
Made from alcohol malt. It has alcohol so it's not very popular.

"It's sweet, not like sake"
"But it's sake after all, so only one bottle"

'Ku Ku' drank Riru-san. So moe.

Turning around suddenly, I see Ganglabe-san strategizing whilst drinking the amazake I made.
Given that he's talking to the other commanders, I wonder how are we going to go about climbing over this snow mountain and attacking the enemy.
Hm? One of the commanders is looking over here. I wonder what that's about?

In the end, it seems like we're just resting today and moving forward tomorrow.
Riru-san and I as the trailing troops remain here.
Doing the dishes on this kind of day is kinda tough. The cold pierces your skin.

"Excuse me"

Hn?

“Ah, it’s Ahrius-san”
“I have something to talk about”

Ahrius-san is the magic specialist who commands the magician unit.
Looking from afar before, a huge fireball with a diameter of a meter fell upon the campsite of the enemy without mercy.
That was Ahrius-san. A peerless beauty.
Long, glossy silver hair with good looking features, being slightly taller than me and a girl with perfect proportions. Except, she was flat chested.
In the magician’s unique robe held two short wands in the chest area.
That was Ahrius-san. I wonder why she wanted to talk with me.

“What is it?”
“W-well you see…”

The me who felt that Ahrius-san being slightly embarrassed was erotic, should be normal.

“Would you teach me how to cook?”

…It’s the face of a girl in love.
Because Ahrius-san.
Seemed to like Ganglabe-san.
Rather, it’s obvious if you just look.
Glimpsing over him, touching him boldly and such.
Looking at him with kind eyes that she obviously doesn’t have towards the other campsite for the other males.
You don’t even need to ask because it’s obvious at first glance.
It seems like the person herself plans to hide it so she’s getting too close.
The only person who hasn’t realised it seems to be only Ganglabe-san himself.

“Cooking, is it? I don’t mind but do you have any cooking experience?”
“No…”

This, if I teach her cooking I can only see an ending with a grotesque stomachache.

“How about holding a knife?”

“…a little”
“Even though you have no experience cooking?”
“Sorry, I was being pretentious…”

The me who felt that Ahrius-san folding her arms awkwardly was erotic is healthily normal.

“Hnn, suddenly asking me to teach you how to cook…
There’s no problem with me teaching you but, it won’t be easy you know?”
“That…”
“But why so sudden?”

There hasn’t been many chances to talk with me till now.
Besides, this person the first time she met me immediately said she would kill me.
It was scary so I haven’t talked with her much.

“That is… you won’t tell anyone?”
“Don’t worry about it I’m tight-lipped”
“I… like Ganglabe”

I know!!! Everyone knows!!!
Nowadays with the setting where the beautiful girl likes the hot guy, killing intent will gush out.
In order to lower the wave of killing intent, it seems like they shoot at a ○ motion.
‘Guu’, I endured saying that everyone already knows.

“Haa, is that so”
“And then, recently I often see Ganglabe eating your cooking deliciously.
I’m, a little jealous.”

This BL factor, I’ve never wanted this at all!!!

“That’s, well…”
“If I could also cook for Ganglabe, I think he would turn to look at me.
Recently Riru and Cougar’s troops have made great efforts so he’s looking over there.
I want to do something for Ganglabe’s sake.
Even magic, I’ll learn more.”

The worries of one's love. A secluded young lady.
Dang, the compensation for being beautiful is amazing.

"Ahrius-san, you aren't troubled with magic are you?"
"… Just a little"

So you were troubled.
Riru-san and Cougar-san had them, so I was thinking maybe but.

"Magic isn't really my field so I can't say anything about that.
But I can help you with your love"
"Eh!? Really!?"

Close, too close, smells good….
Ha, what am I doing!?

"The region I was in, there's food for people who were intimate.
Luckily the season and region is just right as well. I'll invite both you and Ganglabe."
"Eh? You'll be there too?"
"At that time, please just treat me as one of the background"

I said and felt like crying.

"And? Did you invite me over for some cooking meeting?"

That night I called for Ganglabe-san and Ahrius-san.
Helping out, Riru-san made the table and chairs.
A hamburg steak was the reward. Beef is quickly running low.

"Welcome dear customers. Please sit over here"

I gently suggested them to sit on the chairs.
On the table, plates and spoons have been prepared, as well as something similar to ponzu.
(TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponzu)
In the fish sauce, soaking in spring onions as well would've end up harming the taste of this dish.

"Now, if you would allow me to start cooking"
"Oh, cooking in front of us?"

Ganglabe-san seems to be having fun.
Ahrius-san looks over here with eyes full of killing intent.
Like I said, I didn't want this BL factor!

"Even if I say that, the stock is already done. It'll be done shortly"

This time I allowed myself to make boiled tofu.
Before when I was staying in the ocean district, they were selling kelp so I bought some.
The quality is good and makes a good stock.

"This is where you place the tofu"

It was tofu made from soybean and bittern which I got at the sea.
It was quite tough to make this.
Because I had to start by making the tools for creating this.
For that I made a hamburg steak for Riru-san. Beef, its stock is looking bad.

"It's finishing slowly boiling with a simmer. It's boiled tofu."
"…Just this?"

Ganglabe made a surprised looking face.

"This is best eaten during the cold season"
"I see, and, will you serve me a dish?"
"No, I won't be participating."
"What?"

I handed over the special ladle.
The one with the holes in it.

"Serving it to each other, poking at the same pot.
That's the real thrill of hot pot cooking."

This time, Ahrius-san made a face like she realised something.

"Ganglabe, let me serve you a dish"
"Hn? Ah, thanks"

Ahrius-san places three tofus onto Ganglabe-san's plate.

"In that case let me serve you your dish"
"Eh?! Eh, then, ok…"

Feeling embarrassed she gave her ladle and plate to him.
Giving each other three pieces, the dinner meeting starts.

“Delicious!”
“Really… even though it’s so simple.”

Both of them were surprised.
But, saying it’s simple is another thing.

“Ganglabe-san. If this hot pot had no kelp added to it what to you think?”
“It’d have the same taste right?”
“No, the taste would be drastically different.”

Both of them were confused.

“I won’t go into too much detail but, the minor role of the kelp melting into the hot pot is an extremely small factor which makes it savoury as it permeates the lead act, the tofu, which is what creates this taste.
How is it? To the lead Ganglabe-san, I wonder who it is that makes you savoury?”

Somehow saying that myself is so embarrassing.
Ganglabe made a face like ‘what’, and Ahrius-san was looking over at Ganglabe-san with a feverish gaze.

“No way, Ahrius…”
“…yes”

Confirms the embarrassed Ahrius-san.
With this my job ends here.
While the two talk from afar, Shuri shall make a cool exit…

The next day, Ahrius-san thanked me.
‘Thanks, right now we can’t be lovers but if you’re feeling down I’ll be the one to confess’, it seems like a manly response.
‘Riajuu should just go an explode’, was what I was thinking though.
For the comrades close to me to become happy, I wasn’t thinking about that.

By the way I was asked things about composition, elements and molecules so I answered them.
We won the battle later on but, it seems Ahrius-san was unstoppable.

Chapter 8 - Boiled Tofu of Lovesickness (Part 2)

I have someone I like.

The person who has always been leading us since the slum times.

Someone who used to fight together with Cougar who jumps into the front lines and fights enemies.

Us five childhood friends are orphans. Losing our parents at an early age because of the war, we brought our shoulders together to survive.

Always thinking up ways to survive, protecting ourselves. We stole as well. And hurt people.

But that person carried all of the pain, the crime, on his tiny shoulders.

I want to someday get closer to that shoulder. I want to carry his burden together.

I realised that it was love shortly after we started the mercenary corp together. When that person encounters danger and when we survive, somehow tying our lives together.

I was constantly on the verge of losing the person I love.

I am Ahrius.

The commander in charge of the magicians unit in the mercenary corp that Ganglabe started.

On the battlefield, magicians are a threat.

Manipulating mana and dropping fireballs into the enemy camp, defending against an endless downpour of arrows with an ice wall, intercepting approaching enemies with wind blades.

The strength and the types of usable magic is restricted by a person’s training. If you just have talent you can’t become a magician.

Even if you have talent, most can only influence objects. Those are the craftsman called magic engineers and magic craftsmaster.

Only one in ten thousand can train to manipulate mana, and only a tiny

percentage of them can become magicians who manipulate magic.

Due to there being only so few magicians, my unit all in all only has four people.

If you look from the outside it’s more than enough though. Normally it’s good to even have a magician, and if you have two there’s probably no way you could fall behind in battle.

And with four. There’s a reason why this mercenary corp rarely ever loses.

But there’s also a reason why our scale can’t grow.

Basically, the pay is expensive. Defeating a large amount of enemies, taking into account of the weapon cost, and having to provide payment in the form of wages.

If the payment for a magician is low then they would go to a different corp. Even now, magicians are very popular and they tend to go to places which treat them well.

Naturally, the troops I lead and I came to an agreement for cheaper pay. But compared to the other troops it’s much more expensive.

Up till now it’s been full of dissatisfaction, and restraining them was tough but, recently there hasn’t been any complaints.

The reason is because of Shuri.

The pay is cheap but, the food is good.

Truthfully speaking, while other troops have delicacies which can’t be tasted, you can eat that here every time. It can improve your body condition and there’s a kid who’s happy that it improved their magic accuracy.

The pay is cheap but if you can eat Shuri’s cooking every time then it’s still quite a lot cheaper than going to the tavern over there. Rather, that’s the consensus of my subordinates.

If Shuri wasn’t here then we may have disbanded.

That day too, while we were eating lunch we happened to talk with the commanders.

Facing forward I looked to my subordinates, somehow they were eating Shuri's cooking and drinking alcohol.

"Drinking alcohol, what would happen if a battle were to happen right now!"

"No, Commander Ahrius. This, according to Shuri it's too weak to be considered alcohol."

Asking about it a bit more, the alcohol seems to be called Amazake.

"Shuri-kun said that if it's alcohol it'll warm us up. But it'll be troublesome if we get drunk so, he made a drink which warms your body and hard to get drunk off"

"It seems like it would make your skin smooth as well"

"It's sweet and easy to drink, hard to get drunk off, warms you up, and it's good for your beauty and health. Shuri-kun is like a magician"

'I'm glad I'm in this unit', my three female subordinates seem happy.

It's Shuri again huh.

Since he's arrived the atmosphere of the corp has been constantly changing.

Ganglabe was starting to see the necessity of the management of the logistics as well as the food situation in the corp.

Riru gained some idea from Shuri, making new inventions and techniques.

Cougar raised his skill as if he expanded his understanding.

It's like Teg from the archery unit. Getting better and better while eating without a thought.

Similarly I'm also having troubles.

Forever making no progress with Ganglabe's relationship.

While Riru, Cougar and the other units are making great contributions.

And recently I'm having problems with magic accuracy.

I left telling my subordinates that I was going to a meeting.

Meeting up with Ganglabe, he was drinking amazake again.

“Ganglabe, what would happen if you as a commander got drunk?”

“Ah, my amazake is a different type”

A different type?

“According to Shuri, it seems like the other amazake he distributed apart from mine have a tiny bit of alcohol in them. I heard that the raw materials he uses originates from alcohol.

I refused because I wasn’t able to get drunk but, then he went and made an amazake which used grain as the raw material. This has absolutely no alcohol in it.

This has no alcohol in it, takes a bit more effort, delicious and sweet. Furthermore it keeps your body warm.”

To the Ganglabe who was laughing happily, I was feeling regretful.

Right now Ganglabe was happy with Shuri.

The one softening his hardships, standing next to him, was without a doubt his existence. Because of his existence both Riru and Cougar have changed. Ganglabe’s hardships have lessened and the corp has increased in size.

I wasn’t there.

Truth be told, the one who should be standing there is me.

I look to Shuri and he was handing amazake to Riru while talking sweetly to her.

I’m jealous of him.

Being able to stand next to Ganglabe as he does his job behind the scenes.

Even after it became night time I was feeling depressed.

The amazake as well as his cooking were delicious to the point I can’t complain.

If I could make this kind of cooking, I think the distance between me and Ganglabe would probably shorten.

At that time I received a divine revelation.

That’s right. It’s fine if I can make it too.

And if Ganglabe ate my handmade cooking, he might notice me.

Strike while the iron is hot. I rush out of my tent, and even though it was late at night Shuri was doing the dishes.

Even though it was so cold, he's earnestly washing a pile of dishes.

Looking at that, I felt embarrassed of myself.

Without a doubt his hands should be full of chaps. Not minding if it's cold, or hot, he's responsible for everything from washing the dishes to the cooking.

From our point of view, we who risk our lives, some might say that that's exactly what he should be doing.

But, is that how it really is?

With the expansion and recruitment of troops, the members in the teams are increasing. My team too might get a newbie soon.

But the team which should be increasing the most, the cooks, aren't increasing at all.

Even though his hardships should be lowering, it's actually increasing.

Doing nothing but eating and drinking alcohol, seeing him at work a little made me jealous.

That's not improper is it?

"Excuse me"

Holding courage, I talk with him.

He, who works hard behind the scenes, shouldn't it be fine if I believe in him a little?

"Ah, is it Ahrius-san"

"I have something to talk about"

Shuri replied curiously.

"What is it?"

"T-that is…"

Thinking that I was being jealous until just now is a little embarrassing.

“Would you teach me how to cook?”

“Cooking, is it? I don’t mind but do you have any cooking experience?”

“No…”

I have no talent whatsoever for the culinary arts, and honesty have never cooked before.

I can’t say that doing that from back then counts as experience.

“How about holding a knife?”

“…a little”

I can’t say that it’s annoying so I use magic to cut things up.

“Even though you have no experience cooking?”

“Sorry, I was being pretentious…”

I was found out right away.

“Hn, suddenly asking me to teach you how to cook…

There’s no problem with me teaching you but, it won’t be easy you know?”

“That…”

Isn’t cooking just cutting, putting it in a pot, adding salt and your done?

“But why so sudden?”

Kuh, of course Shuri would ask the question I feared.

Coming this far, I can only tell him…

“That is… you won’t tell anyone?”

“Don’t worry about it I’m tight-lipped”

“I… like Ganglabe”

Carrying courage I said it. I also brace myself to be laughed at.

But compared with my meek self Shuri isn’t very surprised.

Rather the reaction is weak…

“Haa, is that so”

“And then, recently I often see Ganglabe eating your cooking deliciously.

I’m, a little jealous.”

This too, Shuri didn’t have much of a reaction.

I wonder, has he seen through me already…?

“That’s, well…”

“If I could also cook for Ganglabe, I think he would turn to look at me.

Recently Riru and Cougar’s troops have made great efforts so he’s looking over there.

I want to do something for Ganglabe’s sake.

Even magic, I’ll learn more.”

Shuri places his hand on his chin as if he’s thinking and said.

“Ahrius-san, you aren’t troubled with magic are you?”

“… Just a little”

I was found out.

“Magic isn’t really my field so I can’t say anything about that.

But I can help you with your love”

“Eh!? Really!?”

Without thinking I ended up leaning towards him.

“The region I was in, there’s food for people who were intimate.

Luckily the season and region is just right as well. I’ll invite both you and Ganglabe.”

“Eh? You’ll be there too?”

“At that time, please just treat me as one of the background”

This person, was being considerate of me.

Specifically saying that he’s the background…

Let’s take up his good intentions.

“What? Did you invite me over for some cooking meeting?”

As the moon rose fully up, Shuri came back leading Ganglabe.

As well as a table and chair set. How considerate is he?

“Welcome dear customers. Please sit over here”

He gently invites us to sit so I sit.

A plate and spoon was prepared on the table, and in the plate was some kind of sauce.

“Now, if you would allow me to start cooking”

“Oh, cooking in front of us?”

You’re gonna cook now?

Ganglabe seemed to be having fun, and I have no idea what you’re going to do…

Is that alright?

“Even if I say that, the stock is already done. It’ll be done shortly”

Oh, so it’s just the finishing touches.

“This is where you place the tofu”

There he tosses in a white square shaped thing.

Inside something which looks like kelp is sinking, no matter how you look at it, this soup which just has hot water inside was just starting to boil.

“Bringing it to a slow simmer to finish. It’s boiled tofu.”

“…Just this?”

After a little bit, Shuri stopped cooking.

Ganglabe and I were both dumbfounded, unable to understand.

“This is best eaten during the cold season”

“I see, then, can you serve me a dish?”

“No, I won’t be participating.”

“What?”

Shuri handed to me a strangely shaped spoon.

The spoon for some reason on the bottom had holes here and there.

You can’t scoop up the soup with this. No, you can pretty much only see hot water.

“Serving it to each other, poking at the same pot.

That’s the real thrill of hot pot cooking.”

At this time, I finally understood Shuri’s plan.

This dish. This dish which uses the same iron pot, serving for the sake of your beloved other, can create a space for conversation.

If it’s like this then you can naturally say out your worries, and above all you’re eating from the same pot so it’s easier to become more intimate.

“Ganglabe, let me serve you a dish”

“Hn? Ah, thanks”

Bringing forth my courage I placed some tofu onto Ganglabe’s plate.

I wonder if my worries will reach.

“In that case let me serve you yours”

“Eh?! Eh, then, ok…”

I never would’ve thought that Ganglabe would do this for me.

I already can’t hold back my happiness.

After receiving the same number of tofu we began to eat together.

This tofu, using a spoon to lightly scoop it up would break, mixing with the sauce.

In front of me was black and white. But, a refreshing fragrance tickles up my nostrils.

I chew it in my mouth.

So warm.

Not just the outside of the tofu, the inside too was storing more than enough heat.

A savoury taste that I can't quite describe, entwining it with the sourness of the sauce made it delicious.

This sourness. It has a citrus smell.

Most likely, in the process of preparation he added the juice of the skin, leaving behind this flavour.

Unable to hide the happiness, I swallow the tofu, warming my throat, esophagus, and stomach.

It goes down with a slight burn.

What remains is warmth and freshness.

"Delicious!"

"Really… even though it's so simple."

Even though it's just boiling kelp and tofu.

How is it this delicious I wonder?

"Ganglabe-san. If this hot pot had no kelp added to it what to you think?"

"It'd have the same taste right?"

"No, the taste would be drastically different."

Eh?

At most you're just changing one of the kelp right?

"I won't go into too much detail but, the minor role of the kelp melting into the hot pot is an extremely small factor which makes it savoury as it permeates the lead act, the tofu, which is what creates this taste.

How is it? To the lead called Ganglabe-san, I wonder who it is that makes you taste good?"

Not knowing even if they're there, and even if they are, not being acknowledged.

That’s what Shuri implied.

And he’s probably talking about me.

Ganglabe also noticed something and looked at me.

“No way, Ahrius…”

“…yes”

My face is hot. This probably isn’t just because of the tofu.

Finally, Ganglabe realised it. This love of mine.

What should I do? How should I reply to this?

I lower my face, not continuing to talk.

“Ahrius, listen to me. Look up, I want you to hear this.”

It was a serious manner of talking.

I too resolve myself and looked up.

Ganglabe looks straight at me.

So manly, so attractive.

Ah, I fell in love with a man who’s able to make a face like this.

“I too, like you”

I feel like tears would fall.

My love of several years. Even though I thought first loves wouldn’t bear fruit.

“But, we can’t be lovers right now”

Eh?

“Tomorrow, maybe I might die”

What is he saying…?

“Not just tomorrow. The day after, the week after, the week after that. I don’t know when I’ll die.”

“Please stop!”

“Listen to me!”

Ganglabe grabs my shoulders blocking the exit as my tears flow down in denial.

“However, I have a dream”

“The country… right?”

“That’s right. The country.

A country where no one is hungry, no one is poor. I’ not allowed to die before that comes true. I can’t die. That’s why. When the country is in my hands, won’t you let me be the one to propose?”

That’s not fair. Ganglabe, that’s not fair.

The weakness of falling in love, wasn’t I happy being able to hear those words just now?

There’s no way I can refuse if you were to confess willingly.

“Is it alright to believe that?”

“Yea. I will definitely, become a suitable king for you”

Suddenly, Ganglabe’s face came close to mine.

Suddenly, my lips were stolen away before I had noticed.

“This is, my oath. Whatever I do, it’ll be with all my might”

“Yes… yes… “

My tears won’t stop.

My feelings have finally reached him.

I have a feeling I can finally stand by the side of this person.

The next day, I was delighted to thank Shuri.

It seems that he disappeared midway.

He ended up being considerate once again.

To Shuri, I have a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid.

But I don’t feel bad about it.

Because if this person wasn’t here, most likely my love would not have come to fruition.

But, there was that strange conversation.

I wonder what that tiny savoury taste is?

In the midst of talking about tofu, the thing that Shuri was talking about.

Something so small that you can't even see it with the naked eye, I wonder if something like that exists?

"Ahrius-san. The world is made up of atoms and molecules. Well, tiny beads and the things those beads are attached to."

When I heard this I couldn't hide my shock.

We are an assembly of beads. And there are an uncountable varieties and amounts of beads, and the world is a composition gathered from all of this?

Truth.

It's not wrong even if you say it like that. Shuri carelessly asserted that the world is composed like this.

But, if you say it like this you can explain it.

Magic craftsmasters can only interfere with material which have been formed from these beads, magicians can interfere with the beads in the air.

And then, mana is the fuel which can interfere with whatever type of bead it is.

That's why, manipulating mana and interfering with beads through mana, I can create the phenomenon of realising my imagination.

I attained the truth.

And then, in the battle after this I used that truth as the origins of my magic, exercising my authority over magic with accuracy to a level which couldn't be compared to the past.

What truth is, is tofu.

This phrase is on the verge of coming to an end.

Ahrius Denju Aprahda.

As the wife of the first united emperor Ganglabe Denju Aprahda, she was also the first headmaster of the national academy of magic, and is praised as a

matchless magician.

A peerless beauty, a witch of hellfire who scorches down the battlefields.

With the magic she uses, the battle at the country of snow became as hot as the middle of summer, melting all the snow, leaving behind a record so bad that crops thought it was spring and starting sprouting.

Even in the present, a magician who can surpass her, or even be on the same level as her does not exist.

This is considered to be because of her heavy discipline as a magician as well as being able to attain what is called ‘truth’ from the abyss of magical knowledge.

In the later years, it is said that although she accepted her three subordinates as disciples, none of the three were able to completely understand the ‘truth’ she spoke of. Those three later went on to be called the ‘three sages’ but, even in the literary works they reported or the oral teaching they left behind, there were still unfinished topics to be discussed about the study of magic, and there was no consideration about how much time they would need to spend before reaching an answer.

Furthermore, as the foothold for how Ahrius reached the ‘truth’, she points to one dish.

That dish was spread by the great chef ‘Shuri Azuma’, a dish which can be eaten in taverns during the empire’s winter.

A dish made just by simmering kelp and tofu.

She is fond of eating that dish, and says this each time she eats it.

“As expected, only this tofu is packed with the truth”

Chapter 9 - Pot-au-fue of Nostalgia (Part 1)

Recently, I've been accumulating stress.

Marching, fighting, working in cold areas and being worked to death, I can't take care of my body properly.

In the end, I caught a cold.

Sup~ it's Shuri.

I'm suffering from a delightful cold.

My throat hurts and my body hurts, and it's cold and it's hot… I don't even know what is why anymore.

In this kinda condition I don't even know how the cooking tastes like.

At any rate my nose was blocked and with my mouth drying up… the taste is ridiculous.

"Soz. I should have gotten you an assistant earlier."

Ganglabe-san came over to apologize, nursing me in my tent.

He looked apologetic.

"No… I should've taken better care of my body… then this wouldn't have happened…"

"I'm responsible too, I was negligent of our emergency medical supplies.. We relied too much on your cooking…"

"That's because getting relied on… it makes me happy…"

Even working, and just receiving a 'It's delicious' makes it worthwhile.

"No more on me… what about everyone…? Are you all… eating properly…?"

"Yea. However, the taste is terrible. Everyone's wishing for your recovery."

"Such an exaggeration…"

It's something which can be recovered with rest.

Even though Ganglabe-san's was still looking sad.

"It's not an exaggeration. There's also no doctor nearby. No medicine. It'll be frightening if an accident were to occur."

Well, it would be bad if it became pneumonia.

But it is an exaggeration. I laughed.

"I won't… die easy…"

"I'll believe you ok. Everyone really wants to rush over here and nurse you.

It's because of you, that everyone's here"

"Ahaha… tell them I said… thank you… very much"

Ganglabe-san looked disappointed as he left the tent.

I lit up the portable stove next to my futon, putting in egg and sake and spinning it round and round.

Eggnog. This is the thing when you catch a cold.

"…There's no taste."

But I couldn't taste it.

Despite that I drained it down and lied down.

At this sort of time, I wonder what I would be doing back on Earth?

Mom and Dad would probably make that dish for me.

Porridge, or rice gruel.

There was one more thing, that was created in my house.

"Dad… mom…"

This is the sort of thing people end up saying when they're weak.

I thought I didn't hold anymore attachments.

It's already been half a year since I've come to this world.

Mom, Dad, my friends and bosses of the same year.

I'm quickly forgetting how they look like.

Not knowing how to get back, I wonder when it was that I became familiar with this place, maybe I had made myself forget about it.

I want to meet them, even if it it's just a glimpse…

It seems like I fell asleep at some point.

My body condition is better. My fever, sluggishness, and pain too were drawn away.

"… Gotta go toilet"

I felt it coming.

Leaving the tent, a beautiful night sky.

After taking care of my business on the tree trunk, there is someone in front of my tent.

"Eh, Teg-san?"

"Ah, hey, Shuri. You aight?"

"Yea, more or less"

It was the commander of the archery unit Teg-san.

He has brown dreadlocks and a person who gives you the feeling that he was joking around.

However with his archery prowess, he has never missed a shot. A person with extraordinary skills.

"It's cold, aren't you going to go inside?"

"Ah, no, it's cool. You should probably go to sleep soon too"

"I'm feeling better so it's no problem. Besides I kinda want to talk to someone."

At any rate, it's because this half year has been noisy.

When it suddenly becomes quiet, my lonely feelings seem to overflow.

"I see… then I accept your offer. Besides I too, have something I want to talk about, su."

Oh? I wonder what it is?

Sitting inside, Teg was acting docile.

“Shuri. Hey, don’t you want to go back home?”

“Eh?”

I wonder what’s happening all of a sudden?

“I want to return. Of course.”

“Ain’t that right… “

“But I might not be able to return”

He was looking curious, Teg-san.

“I won’t go into too much detail cause it’s complicated but, it’s far away. It’s not very easy to get there.

And it’s not on this continent.”

“Not, on this continent?”

“Well…”

‘I see’ Teg-san looked sad.

That’s no good, there’s no way you can show that face to everyone.

“I’ll go make some supper”

“Ah, then I’ll just…”

“No, won’t you eat with me?”

It’s a little surprising.

“This dish. This dish was a dish that my family made for me whenever I caught a cold.

That’s why, it might be better for there to be someone by my side”

Eating this dish alone, I would recall my memories and be lonely.

Placing a pot on the portable stove, I start cooking.

I had the ingredients as I thought this might happen .

What I made was Pot-au-feu.

My mom made it for me, saying it was nutritious for colds.

It was a pot-au-feu which was prepared a long, long time ago as a treat with made with carrot, chinese cabbage, sausage alongside a consomme soup with potato.

Ah, I missed this.

Even now I don't think it's likely mine can beat my moms.

Mom's pot-au-feu was just that delicious.

The finished pot-au-feu swapped positions with the plate in front of Teg-san.

"Come on, let's eat"

"Is this… sausage meat?"

"Yes, it goes well with this dish"

I took a scoop with the spoon and ate it.

Ah, so warm.

But, it still isn't as good as moms.

"It's good. I always thought that potatoes were just used to increase your fullness, su."

"It's not just to make you full. Potatoes are highly nutritious and are good for your body.

The ones which have been soaked in taste, are special."

"Ain't that… the truth"

"This was, something my mom made for me"

A few words ended coming out.

"Rather than missing it a little. Rather than feeling sad…

After I entered this corp, everyone is nice. But it's tough, unable to meet with your family"

Ah, as I thought, I still had a cold.

I was actually complaining like this.

“All of us!”

Teg-san?

“All of us, are orphans. Ganglabe, Riru, Cougar, Ahrius, me, everyone.

But we think of each other as family.

And in that is Shuri. You are there too.

That’s why, if you ever feel lonely, you can rely on us.

Because we are a family that live and die together.”

… I’m a lucky thing.

Even though we have only been together for just half a year, there were people willing to call me family.

Tears fell.

“Yes… thank you very much…”

“We will absolutely protect you Shuri.

That’s why Shuri. It’s fine if you come to our place.

These delicious meals. If we had parents, then I think this is what they would make.

We are the ones who should be thanking you”

“Ok… ok…”

“It’s good. This soup”

I’m happy.

This me, was able to make a family.

The next day, my condition got better and I returned to being a cook.

I received nice words from everyone in the corp.

Like, I’m glad.

Or, Don’t catch a cold again.

Or, I’m counting on you for delicious meals again.

It was just like Teg-san said.

This place was full of people who accepted me as their comrade, part of their family.

Mom, Dad. I probably won’t be able to return.

But I’m happy over here.

Don’t worry, and please live healthily, everyone over there.

The snow stopped and I look up at the blue sky, I prayed for that thought to reach my family.

From that day onward, Teg-san became stronger by far devoting himself to training.

Teg-san always had an atmosphere like he was playing around, calming the place down.

But actually he was an extremely nice and strong guy.

Chapter 10 - Pot-au-fue of Nostalgia (Part 2)

I have never decided things for myself.

When Ganglabe wanted to start up a mercenary corp, I went along with it as long as we were able to somehow have something to eat.

Even the times when Riru-chan created inventions, I thought, ‘Well, alright’.

Even during battles, when the aide was issuing instructions, I never decided where to go

Always looking from the back, surviving with the flow.

That is my way of life.

I’m Teg. The commander of the archery unit.

As for the reason why I chose the bow, it was just because I hated being on the front lines.

Besides, it was also because Ganglabe said “You, think about the organization of your troops and use a bow”

That’s why somehow, I use the bow.

Fortunately because I had a talent for the bow I didn’t end up being a hindrance on the battlefield.

However, only one time have I regretted it.

In the past, a battle to retreat from the battle we lost, Ganglabe received a heavy injury.

As a commander as well as the corp leader, for some reason Ganglabe was working in the Shingari, the rear guard.

At that time, Cougar’s team was doing something separately, and wasn’t at that location.

In addition to having no infantry, the cavalry had no choice but to act as the rear guard. There’s no way Riru’s team could act as rear guard and the cost and risk of using Ahrius’ team as rear guard was too high.

At that time I ran as if I was washed away.

Even now, I see it in my dreams.

At that time, if my team had also participated as rear guard, couldn't we have avoided the worst case scenario?

They stopped at a command somehow and, the corp was destroyed and ended without even being dissolved.

At that time, I made an oath.

"Everyone is family. Next time I'll be the one to protect us."

But my habit of many years, my quality of going with the flow, was quite a difficult one to overcome.

What I could do, was lightening up the atmosphere in the corp as a follow up.

Admist that, Ganglabe allowed a man to enter the corp.

A cook named Shuri.

Basically the guy's cooking was delicious.

Up till now it was close to a situation where we all supported ourselves.

As for food, it was at a state where salt was used so much that we couldn't tell one thing from another anymore.

But after Shuri came, everyone has been looking a lot brighter, and I get it.

Mealtimes are enjoyable, and happiness is being able to fill your stomach up with delicious foods.

Being able to eat Shuri's food after winning a battle, you would think that it's good to be alive.

Above all else, it becomes energy for the next battle.

But it's a little frustrating.

The one who was protecting everyone I thought was family in the shadows was, Shuri.

Providing energy for everyone with delicious meals.

Even though I thought that it was frustrating, I also thought that if it's his cooking then it's inevitable.

It's just that delicious.

Such a Shuri caught a cold.

It was because in the recent battles, we were battling in cold areas during the cold season, and responsibility as the chef were all forced upon him.

Shuri is weak. His physique was thin and he honestly can't even swing a sword. And he had no stamina.

But, since he ate the same meals as everyone we thought he was fine, me as well as Ganglabe, we both underrated him.

Nobody could've imagined that Shuri was actually weak to such a degree.

Also Shuri himself, hid it way too well.

A face without complaints, he made everyone's meal every single day.

Without complaining about how tough it is he would use water to finish washing the dishes by himself in this damn cold.

Then he suddenly collapsed with a thud.

Everyone rushed over to look after him.

Shuri said "Sorry".

Even though it was our fault forcing him to do everything we found annoying, he didn't say a single word to blame us.

"Soz. I should have gotten you an assistant earlier."

Inside the tent Shuri was talking with Ganglabe alone.

I mean it's no good if everyone crowded so, Ganglabe was visiting and I was standing guard.

"No… I should've taken better care of my body… then this wouldn't have happened…"

"I'm responsible too, I was negligent of our emergency medical supplies… We relied too much on your cooking…"

“That’s because getting relied on… it makes me happy…”

Wrong, Shuri. That’s wrong.

If we had looked at you more then it wouldn’t have become like this.

“No more on me… what about everyone…? Are you all… eating properly…?”

“Yea. However, the taste is terrible. Everyone’s wishing for your recovery.”

“Such an exaggeration…”

It wasn’t an exaggeration.

Because Shuri collapsed, everyone is greatly troubled.

There is no one here who knows how to cook which is why we relied on Shuri.

If Shuri collapses then, everyone will regress back to bad-tasting food.

It’s not just our unit. The other team’s subordinates are also complaining.

“It’s not an exaggeration. There’s also no doctor nearby. No medicine. It’ll be frightening if an accident were to occur.”

Honestly, our corps’ emergency medical supplies are no good.

We have no knowledge on medicine, and from eating Shuri’s cooking, no one became sick.

If Shuri dies like this, it’ll be our fault.

“I won’t… die so easily…”

“I’ll believe you ok? Everyone really wants to rush over here and nurse you.

It’s because of you, that everyone’s here”

“Ahaha… tell them I said… thank you… very much”

Ganglabe looked severe as he exited the tent.

It was as if he was saying everything was his fault.

“Commander. How is Shuri?”

“He has a fever but, he’s conscious and he is also able to think. There’s no need to worry now”

I was a little relieved.

“But, if we had medicine then this wouldn’t have happened….!”

Ganglabe’s face seemed to have been distorted miserably from frustration.

“It’s my fault. I didn’t think of him properly.

The matter with the medicine, the cook, as well as his hometown.

Although I’ve received so much from him, I haven’t given a single thing in back…!”

The Ganglabe up til now had only thought about winning battles.

Regarding strategies and trickery he was second to none, however.

He wasn’t concerned about the pre-battle preparations.

Food, equipment, armour, pay…

Ganglabe was complaining that just that was eating up all the mercenary corp’s money.

And now, he is leading a mercenary corp close to two hundred people.

But, this time it was all a burden to Shuri.

This was our fault, everyone’s.

“Ganglabe…”

“Don’t say it Teg. Right now, no matter what you say it will just be licking each other’s wounds…”

With that Ganglabe quickly left.

I was a little worried so, I reached for the tent planning to take a look at Shuri.

“Dad… Mom…”

I heard Shuri’s heartbreaking voice.

Shuri has a family.

In a place separated and far away, Shuri had a hometown and family.

So that he could meet those people again he had to desperately survive.

Even though it was that weak Shuri.

At first, I think I was jealous that he had family.

Because we didn't have any.

But, in Shuri's case, it wasn't that he didn't have one. He couldn't meet them.

Not knowing if he could return separated so far away, he came this far without saying a single thought of loneliness.

Compared to that, how were we?

Did we understand Shuri's pain?

Did we know what kind of people were in that family?

Shuri's favourite foods, drinks, the type of women he likes, his interests.

We didn't know anything.

Right now the harmful effects of going with the flow, being forced into a flow, became an enormous regret.

What, 'Protect my family'.

I didn't even ask about Shuri's problems.

"Eh, Teg-san?"

"Ah, hey, Shuri. You aight?"

"Yea, more or less"

At some point Shuri went out, and it was night time.

"It's cold, aren't you going to go inside?"

"Ah, no, it's cool. You should probably go to sleep soon too"

"I'm feeling better so it's no problem. Besides I kinda want to talk to someone."

… It's a good chance.

"I see… then I accept your offer. Besides I too, have something I want to talk about, su."

Sitting inside, I turned to face Shuri.

“Shuri. Hey you, don’t you want to go back home?”

“Eh?”

It was a straight ball, but I wanted to ask.

“Of course I want to return”

“Ain’t that right… “

“But I might not be able to return”

Eh?

“I won’t go into too much detail cause it’s complicated but, it’s far away. It’s not very easy to get there.

And it’s not on this continent.”

“Not, on this continent?”

“Well…”

Not on this continent?

The continent of Sabraeu is an extremely large continent, and travelling from one end to the other would take about one year.

And so far there has been no one who has gone out to sea.

Outside the sea was called “Outer circle sea” and there didn’t appear to be other continents and nothing has ever returned.

Besides if you went out a certain distance there were “Sea monsters”, capable of capsizing boats.

That’s why there hasn’t been anyone who could leave for the outside.

And Shuri says he comes from that place?

“I’ll go make some supper”

Shuri said as I was lost in thought.

“Ah, then I’ll just…”

“No, won’t you come eat with me?”

Hn?

“This dish. This dish was a dish that my family made for me whenever I caught a cold.

That’s why, it might be better for there to be someone by my side”

I realised that this was the first time I heard about Shuri’s family.

That kind of memorable dish, with me?

As I was thinking that, Shuri places the pot onto the portable stove and starts cooking.

For some reason he already had ingredients.

In the dark reddish-brown transparent soup he added sausage meat and potato as well as carrot and chinese cabbage to boil.

Ah, as expected even Shuri’s cooking smells nice.

Being satisfied with the smell, Shuri placed some soup into the plate.

“Come on, let’s eat”

“Is this… sausage meat?”

“Yes, it goes well with this dish”

Sausage meat was sort of an extravagant meat.

Even commoners can have it but, it’s expensive.

I too have eaten it several times but, I had a rough memory of the meat juices being as irresistible and delicious as the sake.

Trying it I ate one spoon.

Delicious.

The soup had a complicated taste, and I could tell my tongue and throat were delighted.

I understood that various ingredients were used to bring out the flavour but, I didn’t know exactly how many.

Even the flavour of the boiled sausage meat was ingrained deeply, as the meat juices and soup mix together creating even better flavour.

The chinese cabbage and carrot too, were soft and melted inside your mouth, falling into your stomach.

But what surprised me was the potato.

I thought that it was normal for potato be steamed to eat.

If my stomach was hungry I would trick it by eating a potato.

Actually, the potato in this soup had flavour, soft and melts gently in your mouth. This was the first time I felt that something like potatoes were delicious.

“It’s good. I always thought that potatoes were just used to increase your fullness, su.”

“It’s not just to make you full. Potatoes are highly nutritious and are good for your body.

The ones which have been soaked in taste, are special.”

“Ain’t that… the truth”

“This was, something my mom made for me”

Shuri’s mother?

“Rather than missing it a little. Rather than feeling sad…

After I entered this corp, everyone is nice. But it’s tough, unable to meet with your family”

“All of us!”

Before I realised I was shouting.

It’s not like they were dead. But they couldn’t meet.

Getting to a clean cut solution like us was wishing for too much, I’m unable to even say that.

I’m pathetic, what ‘I’ll protect my family’.

Couldn’t I just become a part of Shuri’s family!

“All of us, are orphans. Ganglabe, Riru, Cougar, Ahrius, me, everyone.

But we think of each other as family.

And in there is Shuri. You are there too.

That’s why, if you ever feel lonely, you can rely on us.

Because we are a family that live and die together.”

This time for sure, I promise.

I’ll protect my family, my comrades.

“Yes… thank you very much…”

“We will absolutely protect you Shuri.

That’s why Shuri. It’s fine if you come to our place.

These delicious meals. If we had parents, then I think this is what they would make.

We are the ones who should be thanking you”

“Ok… ok…”

“It’s good. This soup”

Shuri had tears flowing but, I pretended not to see it.

Because I finally felt like I came to an understanding with Shuri.

That’s why just now, this will be our secret.

The next day, Shuri became completely healthy.

Receiving ‘I’m glad’ from everyone and getting blessed.

I’ll no longer feel frustrated or jealous.

I won’t get washed away by the flow.

I’ll do whatever I can do.

“Come one, practise”

“Ueee~”

Stirring up my subordinates, doing nothing but repeating martial arts.

“It seems that the commander is motivated these days”

said my vice-commander as he looked at me suspiciously.

“I too, will do what I can when the time calls”

“I see, then as your vice-commander I’ll follow you”

My subordinates accompanied me to desperately train.

When I was suddenly struck with an idea for using the bow in close quarter combat, I refined it with my subordinates too.

I came to be washed away. But even I have a dream, rather I created a goal for myself.

Next time I won’t be washed away. This is my dream.

I want travel from one corner of this continent to the other, collecting information into one book.

Leaving out for the sea, looking for Shuri’s hometown.

To tell Shuri’s parents that Shuri is doing just fine.

For that purpose, I will try my best today.

Teg Valence is seen as a hero but he also holds another identity as an adventurer.

He established one of the two big martial arts of the united empire, Tegu Style (TL: Kanji has Tengu), bow combat technique, a combat style where the bow can be used in close range, mid-range or long range. The name originates from when his close friend muttered “It kinda looks like a Tengu” and is made from those characters.

He retired from his position as the commander of the imperial guards to his successor as quickly as possible and went on a journey.

Going around every place on the continent, looking at everything, eating everything.

After that, he wrote a single book.

Foreign country observation records.

That was the adventure log for everything in the Sabraeu continent.

The book enchanted many adventurers to go into unexplored regions, devil

regions and gave birth to various discoveries.

Teg Valence as the pioneer for the job of adventurer, established the word ‘Adventurer’ itself.

In the future many adventurers had faith in him, he became a great person that gradually there was no adventurer who has not heard of his name.

However, in his final adventure, his whereabouts were cut off for 20 years.

In that time, he had actually went past the Outer circle sea and traveled to another continent.

With the sea road and the seamanship that he discovered, he created a trade route between the new continent.

Then he wrote another book. Becoming an invitation for many adventurers to go on a new journey.

Underworld Observation logs.

That was a record of all the food, culture and history of a country in the newly discovered continent.

In future years, even between scholars who wish to research about the foreign culture would come to use this book at this time.

After he returned from that continent, he lived out the rest of his days carefree with his wife and kids in the capital of the empire, blessed with a grandchild until the end of his life.

It’s said that he would often talk of a close friend he had who was a cook.

According to someone, at that time he would always be served a kind of soup.

Each time he ate it seems that he would say.

“A spoonful of soup, could connect me with the world.”

Chapter 11 - Oden with Everyone (Part 1)

Even after I recover, it never stops being busy.

But I was working with more motivation than before.

In this place with my precious family and comrades.

I came to think that I would like to treasure this.

It’s Shuri.

What was waiting for me after I had recovered from my cold were encouragements of recovery and everyone demanding meals.

Some complaints were “If you’re not here then the food is salty and doesn’t taste good”

Others were worries, “It’s great that you’re well. Be careful so that you won’t get sick again.”

And looking at the dish washing place were a pile of dishes where there still remained some unknown food scraps.

It’s like they were trying to cook, and failing, so it was inevitable that they tossed it away.

Just nearing it my nose seemed to go awry.

A rotting smell.

“Ganglabe-san. Didn’t you say it’s no good to waste ingredients?”

“Seriously… I’ll tell those guys properly”

Ganglabe-san seemed uncomfortable.

It appears he was actually unable to control his subordinates running wild.

“This cream stew is not supposed to be burnt to such a brown colour right?”

“No matter what you say it’s black”

“Just stop this please”

“Yea, you’re fired”

“Ganglabe-san, it’s useless even if you say that to run away.

In order for Riru-san to make hamburg steak she even sauteed minced beef. Furthermore there was no flavour.

I heard Cougar-san had even burnt himself wanting to create fried horse mackerel. That fish was cut into so many pieces that it was just fried fish balls.

Ahrius-san didn’t put in any kelp so it was just tofu in water. It’s a boring flavour.

And you Ganglabe-san. You made this cream stew. Then you made it so that it was your subordinates fault, I know.”

I’m not cheating.

I just made a promise with Riru-san to teach her how to make hamburg steak later for the information.

I know about what everyone did!

“Well… tomorrow night I’m going to make something special”

“What? Special?”

“Therefore today I’ll be cheap, and even if I cook I’ll make less as a punishment”

“The flavour of your cooking… it’s been a while… making less… you say?”

Ganglabe-san zetsuboushimasu. (was looking hopeless.)

There’s no helping it. Wasting ingredients when someone is asleep is a heavy sin.

Naturally, I can’t blame them for cooking in order to survive.

However throwing it away to rot because you failed to cook it is out of the question.

In the end, the amount of food being slightly less ended after one day.

There was loud outcry from the other guys but everyone calmed down after I talked to them about wasting food.

As expected the power of ingredients is great.

And, then the night of the second day.

I got a few helpers to help with the preparation and created a gathering of several tens of people.

“And Shuri? What are you planning?”

Gathered on this table here was Ganglabe-san, Riru-san, Cougar-san, Ahrius-san, Teg-san and I.

With everyone of the commander positions and a gathering of the remaining appropriate comrades.

Riru-san hurriedly made around ten portable stoves for me, gathered them together and opened this meeting.

“Well everyone, for taking care of me when I was sick, thanks again.”

“So distant. Stopping acting so distant between us”

I’m thankful for Ahrius-san’s concern but, that’s not quite right.

“In my country’s language there’s a phrase <A hedge between keeps friendship green>.

It’s a phrase that says you must not forget your manners and be considerate of your companion, even to a close friend.

That’s why I think I want to say my thanks properly.”

“Then, what is this dish? How is this been different from before?”

Fufufu, that is the joy of opening the lid.

“This is hot pot cooking”

“Is it similar to Boiled Tofu?”

“No, it’s thicker than that. And becomes this! Everyone open the lid and see for yourselves!”

Opening the lid, there is a familiar homely flavour.

It’s Oden.

The ingredients are fried tofu, boiled egg, daikon, chikuwa, pounded fish cake, meat tendons and sausage.

(TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chikuwa)

My home also uses mochi as one of the Oden's ingredients but, well, this is the best I can do.

"This… is tofu? It's also holds more solid than boiled tofu…"

"Boiled egg huh, such a luxury. The colour's tainted, soaking in the flavour, su"

From another table too, came a loud voice of expectation.

To make this dish today, I had to manage several ten pots while keeping it simmering well for a whole day.

I'm sure all the ingredients' flavours are certainly being soaked into the Oden.

Because the tendons are getting softer.

"Good, now everyone, let's eat!"

Ohhh~! shouted all the troops as they started to poke at the pot.

"Then us too. Everyone, please"

"Ah, then I'll take the sausage, su"

"The chikuwa for me then? I say"

"I'll take the fried tofu"

"…Egg"

"Then the meat is mine. What meat is this?"

"Tendons"

"What? Isn't that the thing that's so hard it's barely edible?"

"Please try it. You'll definitely be in for a surprise"

Everyone took each of the ingredients they liked and started eating.

Then, I'll just have the pounded fish cake.

By the way the processed food known as chikuwa was made based on the help of Riru-san.

As expected it’s more delicious if you’ve worked hard for it.

“Boiled egg, hehe”

Riru-san seems so happy while eating both the egg white and egg yolk.

“This thing you call chikuwa, tastes like fish. It has such a strange taste”

Cougar-san was entranced with the chikuwa.

By the way, the hole in the chikuwa was stuffed with arctium so the food texture was more pleasurable.

“Fried tofu is different from boiled tofu, the tofu remains in proper shape and it fills you up”

Ahrius-san ate the fried tofu elegantly.

“This sausage, it’s different from the one in pot-au-feu. Eating it together with the daikon, this is even more delicious, su!”

Teg-san nodded as he ate the sausage mixed with the daikon.

“Impossible… this is meat tendons? Not hard. Soft. It’s enjoyable to eat, and the chewy texture is great. The flavour too, is great”

Ganglabe-san couldn’t hide his surprise from the meat tendon’s wonderfulness.

I can also hear the other tables saying ‘Delicious’ and ‘This is great’. I’m so happy. Hearing such words.

It’s a special occasion so Ganglabe-san lifted the alcohol ban.

Everyone was happily eating Oden, drinking alcohol, talking.

“As I thought, this corp is nice place.

Finding this corp is my happiness”

Family and friends.

Both of those are in this corp.

If I was found by any other corp, it probably wouldn’t end up like this.

There’s no doubt that it would be worse.

That’s why this is my repayment for everything so far.

And to take care of me from now on.

“Shuri, will you continue making food for us here from now on?”

“Yes. Until I’m fired, forever. Although I reminisce about my hometown, I belong here after all”

“Is that so? Good”

Ganglabe chugs down his alcohol in one breath, and looked at everyone.

“Me, my goal is to become the king of the country I make uniting the entire continent.

You shall accompany me. Shuri.”

“Yes, Ganglabe-san”

“Then, Riru will too”

Riru stopped eating her egg.

“Riru will use my magic engineering techniques for the country’s peace. Next time, I could make daily products similar to the ones Shuri make, or tell various people about magic engineering.

Or make a school”

“Then I’ll be the commander in chief of the country. Becoming the world’s strongest master swordsman, immortalising my techniques forever.”

“I want to make a magic school just like Riru. Not a school that only nobles can attend, I will recruit different people, recruit believers. And I also want to be a good wife”

“As for me, after the country achieves peace I’ll go around the place, putting together a book, su. Once I’ve conquered the continent, then I’ll also go conquer the seas!”

Before we noticed everyone was talking about their dreams.

It should be from the alcoholic influence.

But there was no one there making fun of them, not even the surrounding

soldiers.

On the contrary, they're saying 'That would be great'.

"Then I'll be the one to help with everyone's dreams"

Of course, me included.

I want to see when everyone's dreams have been fulfilled.

"I want to be someone able to continue cooking delicious meals"

I will definitely not leave this corp.

This is where I belong.

Chapter 12 - Oden with Everyone (Part 2)

Our dreams finally started from here onwards.

Even starting the mercenary corp wasn't as exciting as this.

I never thought it would be as fun as this.

However this definitely wouldn't have been accomplished if that guy wasn't here.

I didn't believe in things like fate but.

This was probably the thing called fate.

"Ganglabe-san. Didn't you say it's no good to waste ingredients?"

"Seriously… I'll definitely tell those guys properly"

Shuri recovered from his sickness.

The next day it seems like his body condition got better, being revived as a cook.

Of course everyone, my subordinates, and comrades welcomed this. Of course it's because they can escape from that extremely terrible food!

However I was too optimistic on the outlook. Way too optimistic.

Basically the disposal of the food scraps. We neglected to destroy to the evidence.

"This cream stew is not supposed to be burnt to such a brown colour right?"

That was my failure.

Everyone else tried to recreate Shuri's cooking too, doing this and that by trial and error.

As a result there was a mass production of filth which couldn't even be eaten.

Wasting large amounts of ingredients, only waste products which couldn't be eaten or used as fertiliser were left over.

That kind of evidence. I forgot to hide it.

In my case I tried to make the soup and burnt the ingredients.

Completely burnt.

“No matter what you say it’s black”

“Just stop this please”

“Yea, you’re fired”

Sorry but I’ll make it the other’s fault instead.

Shuri looked like a Hannya.

“Ganglabe-san, it’s useless even if you say that to run away.

In order for Riru-san to make hamburg steak she even sauteed minced beef. Furthermore there was no flavour.

I heard Cougar-san had even burnt himself wanting to create fried horse mackerel. That fish was cut into so many pieces that it was just fried fish balls.

Ahrius-san didn’t put in any kelp so it was just tofu in water. It’s a boring flavour.

And you Ganglabe-san. You made this cream stew. Then you made it so that it was your subordinates fault, I know.”

I was found out?!

It has to be Riru!

Riru got withdrawal symptoms not being able to eat hamburg steak.

Unable to concentrate on inventing or manufacturing equipment, rolling around all day and moaned “Hamburg… Hamburg steak…”

There and then Shuri swooped down and revived. There and then hamburg steak revived.

That girl anticipated this, and friggin exchanged information for a hamburg steak!

“Well… tomorrow night I’m going to make something special”

“What? Special?”

Deep down I was scared of what kind of revenge Shuri would come up with but, he laughed sarcastically.

Something special, he says?

That was the first time Shuri has said that sort of thing.

“Therefore today I’ll be cheap, and even if I cook I’ll make less as a punishment”

“The flavour of your cooking… it’s been a while… making less… you say?”

I-Impossible. If he does such a thing, won’t I get loud protests from my subordinates?

My subordinates as well as my comrades were so happy from Shuri’s revival that they jumped up.

It’s already good not eating bad meals. It’s already good not eating meals that you have no choice to eat until you have to pay.

But this guy’s meals taste good and yet you can’t help but want to eat. The smell and taste reverberates into the empty stomach, making you want to eat more.

And yet there’s less to eat.

This sort of torture. I’ve never ever heard of this…!

I finally noticed after such a long time.

Inside of Shuri’s smile is a red-hot burning flame of anger!

The second night.

My subordinates, comrades, everyone clad in an atmosphere as if they were hungry wolves, and the dinner party opened for business.

It was tough getting to this point.

The criticisms from my subordinates, were appeased by Shuri’s anger and sound argument that the waste of ingredients were because of them. And then came to me with spearheads.

Why couldn’t I persuade him or, why did you do such a thing?

I mean by the time I condemned them saying ‘Wasn’t it your guys fault?’, it was already too late.

In this air full of tension, Riru was lusting insatiably after a hamburg steak with an innocent look, burning it into the brain.

Because tomorrow night Shuri’s making his special meal, I persuaded them to wait until then, finally settling the uproar.

Which was why today was arrived peacefully.

“And Shuri? What are you planning?”

Gathering here are the six of us, Shuri, Riru, Cougar, Ahrius, Teg and me.

It seems like we’re cooking on specially made coals and pot.

Today’s dish is probably something special because there’s a gathering of several tens of people setting everything up.

Even Teg was questioning this. Honestly I wanted to know as well.

“Well everyone, for taking care of me when I was sick, thanks again.”

“So distant. Stopping acting so distant between us”

It’s just as Ahrius said.

We already aren’t that distant anymore.

Me, as well as everyone else here. Thinks of Shuri as a comrade.

“In my country’s language there’s a phrase <A hedge between keeps friendship green>.

It’s a phrase that says you must not forget your manners and be considerate of your companion, even to a close friend.

That’s why I think I want to say my thanks properly.”

Considerate, huh.

After I made this mercenary corp, I had forgotten that spirit.

It even keeps friendship green?

Shuri, that means you've basically recognised us as close friends.

"Then, what is this dish? How is this been different from before?"

Certainly.

I mean I can't really say anything because I haven't opened the lid but, what's the difference from the cooking up till now?

"This is hot pot cooking"

"Is it similar to Boiled Tofu?"

"No, it's thicker than that. And becomes this! Everyone open the lid and see for yourselves!"

It's as if everyone was waiting for Shuri's long-awaited signal.

Opening the lid together.

This place was enveloped with an irresistible smell.

The ingredients are tofu that's been fried, egg, daikon, chikuwa, pounded fish cake, some kind of soft meat, and sausage meat.

What an extravagant pot. The smell as well as the colour of the soup was unique.

"This… is tofu? It's also holds more solid than boiled tofu…"

"Boiled egg huh, such a luxury. The colour's tainted, soaking in the flavour, su"

From the other tables voices of expectation grew louder.

This looked similar to the boiled tofu that Ahrius ate before but it's a little different.

This wasn't as light as that.

It was thicker, as if it's something that could be seen at some food market.

Well of course. Using just these ingredients, it isn't something you can eat quickly.

The taste is probably something I can hope for.

"Good, now everyone, let's eat!"

Ohhh~! shouts all the troops as they started to poke at the pot.

“Then us too. Everyone, please”

“Ah, then I’ll take the sausage, su”

“I say, the chikuwa for me then?”

“I’ll take the fried tofu”

“…Egg”

“Then the meat is mine. What meat is this?”

“Tendons”

“What? Isn’t that the thing that’s so hard it’s barely edible?”

“Please try it. You’ll definitely be in for a surprise”

Hoh, then I’ll hold expectations for that.

I take the tendons.

Tendons isn’t something you can eat tough.

It’s tough to bite into, and there’s no flavour.

Despite that. There’s a good colour on this thing, and soft. It’s jiggling.

I put it in my mouth full of expectations.

“Boiled egg, hehe”

Riru seems so happy whilst eating both the egg white and egg yolk.

“This thing you call chikuwa, tastes like fish. It has such a strange taste”

Cougar was entranced eating the chikuwa.

By the way, it seems that the inside was stuffed with burdock.

“Fried tofu is different from boiled tofu, the tofu remains in proper shape and it fills you up”

Ahrius ate the fried tofu elegantly.

“This sausage, it’s different from the one in pot-au-feu. Eating it together with the daikon, this is even more delicious, su!”

Teg was nodding as he ate the sausage mixed with the daikon.

“Impossible… this is meat tendons? Not hard. Soft. It’s enjoyable to eat, and the chewy texture is great. The flavour too, is great”

And this meat tendon.

Soft and soaked in flavour, the best.

What’s the best way to make it like this?

Speaking of which he said to wait a day. No way, has this been cooking for a full day?

Did it become soft after having been simmering slowly for a full day with the fire?

Normally you wouldn’t think of this. This isn’t the imperial courts kitchen.

Nevertheless the coal wouldn’t have been half-assed.

Neither would have the other ingredients. It can’t be delicious to this point with one day.

From what I’ve heard, chikuwa seems to be manufactured and kneaded from minced fish skins.

I’ve never thought of making fish like that intentionally. Because of that, the flavour was impressively delicious.

Soaking in the juice nicely, the flavour from the boiled ingredients were all first class.

“Finally! You guys, today let’s have fun drinking alcohol!

It would be a complete waste if there’s no alcohol to accompany this kind of delicious meal!”

Everyone gave a roar of joy.

Well of course. This food definitely matches up with the alcohol.

I also had fun drinking and eating for the first time in a while.

Shuri’s cooking is irresistible as expected.

“As I thought, this corp is nice place.

Finding this corp is my happiness”

Looking at everyone, that’s what Shuri muttered.

Happiness, huh. This is closer to a hell where you don’t know when you might die.

Despite this he’s… happy.

“Shuri, will you continue making food for us here from now on?”

“Yes. Until I’m fired, forever. Although I reminisce about my hometown, I belong here after all”

“Is that so? Good”

Fired? There’s probably no way I’ll do that.

If this guy were to be fired, that’s when this mercenary corp gets disassembled.

Right now, the one keeping this mercenary corp alive is actually Shuri’s cooking.

Because you can eat delicious meals, they persevere because they can eat again if they survive.

If he can survive, I can bring out my motivation too.

If it’s like that, I just have to say it, and I just have to do it.

Gulping down the alcohol with all my strength, I said to them.

“Me, my goal is to become the king of the country I make uniting the entire continent.

You shall accompany me. Shuri.”

“Yes, Ganglabe-san”

I’ll will definitely become a king.

Once I had dreamed of a country where no one is hungry, no one is poor.

“Then, Riru will too”

Riru stopped eating her egg.

“Riru will use my magic engineering techniques for the country’s peace. Next time, I could make daily products similar to the ones Shuri make, or tell various people about magic engineering.

Or make a school”

“Then I’ll be the commander in chief of the country. Becoming the world’s strongest master swordsman, immortalising my techniques forever.”

“I want to make a magic school just like Riru. Not a school that only nobles can attend, I will recruit different people, recruit believers. And I also want to be a good wife”

“As for me, after the country achieves peace I’ll go around the place, putting together a book, su. Once I’ve conquered the continent, then I’ll also go conquer the seas!”

At some point everyone was talking about their dreams.

Not one of my surrounding subordinates made fun of us.

On the contrary, they were giving encouragements, ‘That’s right, that’s right’

I had good comrades, good subordinates.

The one who created that was you. Shuri.

“Then I’ll be the one to help with everyone’s dreams”

Shuri smiled.

“I want to be someone able to continue cooking delicious meals”

The six of us, and my reliable subordinates.

If he’s here, my dream will definitely be granted.

It will begin from here onwards.

Our dreams.

In the future, disputing where the changing point of history occurred, this scene will definitely be a topic of discussion.

“Dinner of the six heroes”

That is the party where they, who will become heroes in the future, talking

about their dreams, started to walk towards each of their dreams.

First Emperor of the United Country.

“King of the Continent” Ganglabe Denju Aprahda.

First principal of the Magic Academy, Legal Wife of the First Emperor.

“Magical Girl of Truth” Ahrius Denju Aprahda.

Founder of the Branshu Magic Engineering Academy.

“Queen of Invention” Riru Branshu.

Founder of the Kuuga School, Commander-in-chief of the United Country.

“Sword Saint of a Hundred Kills” Cougar Yanagi.

Commanding officer of the imperial guards, Founder of the Tegu School, Author of Foreign Country Observation Records and Underworld Observation Records.

“The First King of Adventurers” Teg Valence.

I wonder if anyone could’ve predicted this. That the dreams being talked about here could come true and such.

Future heroes also think that it’s from this party that the military rule of the founding empire was established.

However, only one person’s words differ.

From the words of Ganglabe Denju Aprahda.

The military rule started much before that.

Since the time they met a certain cook, he says that their path of dreams had definitely started.

The proposal for a new culture of cooking came from a cook exclusive the royalty of the united empire.

Loved by countless feudal lord and their citizens.

Inventing countless dishes.

Discovering countless new ingredients.

And had the idea of countless processed foods.

Furthermore saving the citizens of that area from years of famine and bad harvest.

Teaching cooking and opening shops for those who had lost their jobs.

Say historians and archaeologists.

Superficial scholars praise the other heroes but.

Going deeper, striving to pursue further in the kitchen.

It’s understood that without his presence the united empire would not have been established.

His name forever known as.

“King of Meals” Shuri Azuma.

This is him.

Influencing various people without realising it.

Seizing glory without noticing it at all.

This is the story of such a person